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ECHOES FROM
ARCADIA.

The Story of Central City, as told by
one of "The Clan."

> "*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,*
> *An' never brought to mind?*"

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.
Denver, Colo., 1903.

This little sketch-book is offered as a souvenir to such of the clan as are still wandering over the face of the earth; and is dedicated to the memory of those who have found a resting-place beyond the Great Divide.

PREFACE.

One of the titles of this booklet may prove to have been somewhat ill-chosen if it conveys the idea that "the story of Central," in the sense of a detailed history of men, women and events, is contained or attempted in these few pages. Such an undertaking, for the fifteen-year period touched upon here and there, would fairly (and properly) tax the capacity of a ponderous octavo.

The book is but a budget of unpretending sketches, lightly strung together. It aspires to be nothing more; and, so considered, it needs no apology, and offers none, to the readers for whom it is especially intended. These, of course, are the people of the old colony, and they are, sad to say, becoming yearly a more and more restricted circle. It would therefore be sent adrift without the conventional preface, were it not well, perhaps, to forestall the criticisms of some others into whose hands the volume may possibly fall, and who in that case, while likely to read it, may be inclined at the same time to rail at the suggestion that it can be of the remotest general interest; and they may profess, moreover, to deride the theme as too insignificant to justify its consumption of time, paper or printer's ink.

These expected critics live in the capital city, and we all know them well. Indeed, they claim to be our warm friends. They take us cordially by the hand, and smile upon us when we meet at social functions; but on such occasions also, especially when the clan has been largely represented, have we not often overheard them, seemingly with malice in their hearts, but certainly with irreverent tongues, refer to us flippantly as "those Central people?" The phrase seems harmless enough, but I shrink from attempting to convey its tone and manner. They affect to scoff — these friends of ours; but you and I strongly suspect — do we not? — that in truth they are secretly consumed with bitterness because of the unkind fate which cast their own lot outside the rocky palisades of the mountain colony whose story is here related.

It is rather late now to make them eligible to membership in the historic clan — we could not if we would; but can we not tender them the book as an olive branch, so to speak, and encourage them to read the simple story? Perhaps it may dull the edge of their asperity, and impart a more kindly accent to their speech hereafter, when discussing the people of the old colony. *Quien sabe?*

FRANK C. YOUNG.

LANNING BROS.
PRINTERS AND
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COLO.

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The Arcadians, saith the writer of old, regarded themselves as the most ancient people in Greece. Their habits were simple; and the quiet and happiness of their life among the mountains; their passionate fondness for music, in which they excelled; their delight in dancing, which they practised assiduously; and their generous hospitality, for which they were noted, made them pass among the ancients for favorites of the gods; and although they were a brave and martial people, the name of their land became the synonyme for a land of peace, simple pleasures, and untroubled quiet.

U

> "We may build more splendid habitations,
> * * * * * But we cannot
> Buy with gold the old associations."
>
> LONGFELLOW—"*The Golden Mile-Stone.*"

I.

Introductory, Descriptive and Reminiscent.

In the early days of Colorado, the settlement was entirely due to the gold discoveries. There may be nothing surprisingly new in this statement, but, as we are too often apt to overlook what is most familiar, and as it is necessary to my story that the fact should be kept in mind, I repeat that gold was the magnet which drew the pilgrims to the "Pike's Peak country," so called, although the greater part of the "diggings" were located fourscore miles distant from the Peak itself, and none in its immediate vicinity. The "central gold region" embraced a little triangular district in the heart of the mountains, whose longest side measured but six or eight miles, and of which the principal camp, (and the initial point of the discoveries,) named for its geographical position, was called Central City.

Twenty-five miles below, and just within the foot-hills, was located the capital of the Territory — Golden City — which was also the market town of a small agricultural district. Still farther down the valley, at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the Platte River, there was a little settlement called Denver; another, seventy-five miles to the south, near the foot of Pike's Peak; one each at Pueblo and Canon, still farther south, on the sites of old frontier trading posts on the Arkansas; a few farmers had located here and there in the rich valleys at the mouths of Boulder and Clear Creek canyons; various camps of placer miners were at work on many of the mountain streams, or along the inner edges of the three great natural parks; and beyond all these lay a vast unexplored region to the west, known in a general way as the "Ute Indian country," into which no one save a hunter or a trapper had as yet penetrated, and this region embraced at least two-thirds of the area of the present

State. Such was Colorado, geographically considered, in early Territorial days.

Denver, an unsightly collection of rude frames, tents and cabins, grouped together close to the river in a natural basin of the sunbaked prairie, was the supply point for these various outposts. Its location had been fixed by the traders and outfitters who accompanied the rush for gold; and it was named in honor of a distant Territorial governor who had had no hand in its creation, and who never betrayed sufficient curiosity to view his namesake until long years after it had outgrown its callow youth, and assumed the dress and dignity of young manhood. It was the first settlement reached after the long and wearisome tramp across the Plains, and offered the gold-hunters a chance to rest and repair damages before striking into the mountains. The "professional" freighters here delivered their cargoes, and indulged in a short but strenuous period of festivity before starting on their return to "the River," as the Missouri was universally called. Numbers, who toiled not, nor did they spin, made the town their objective point with the common purpose of fattening upon the industry of the mining pioneers, whom they beguiled of their hard-earned "dust" through the enticements of the gaming table, or the fascinations of the music hall. Soon the town, while maintaining its place as the natural distributing point for the whole region, became also the refuge for the settlings of a heterogeneous mass of humanity such as invariably represents the first population of a mining country, and so continued for a number of years. It is of no consequence to this history to recite in detail the various progressive steps that have led up to the beautiful and substantial city of to-day. It is only referred to here as it was in its early days, by way of contrast at that time to the bright little mountain town with whose fortunes this simple narrative has especially to deal.

The little triangular bit of territory in the mountains, a mile and a half above the sea, which embraced the central gold region, was bisected by the north branch of Clear Creek, into which emptied the waters of the great Gregory gulch, which carried the main part of the gold deposits, and which itself formed the left arm of a Y, of which the creek was the right arm and stem. At the junction of these arms and below lay the town of Black Hawk. Above this, and extending along the left arm its entire length on both sides, was Central City, while leading into this arm as tributaries were a number of minor gulches, each with its little settlement or "camp," and at the extreme upper end of all was the little town of Nevada. The course of settlement was such that, proceeding from Black Hawk westward, the stranger was not able to distinguish any dividing line between Black Hawk and Central or between the latter and Nevada, although these represented even at this early date three distinct towns, while the distance between the extreme points measured but two miles. Central City, however, being both the central point and the county seat, became in a way a designation for the entire district among the people who lived outside its borders, and the residents, wherever chance may have placed them along the line of this irregular canyon, were regarded alike as "Centralites," and have so continued to be called unto this day.

—— A mile or two of straggling gulch, following a devious course among the hills, beginning at its lower and eastern end with a narrow gorge of many curves between abruptly steep banks, slowly widening and throwing out arms towards the west, as the hills fall away gradually in that direction until they acquire so decided a slope as to allow of a wide, open, elevated plateau, before they rear themselves higher than ever as they close around it at its upper end in such fashion as to form somewhat the shape of an amphitheätre; one main street crossing the plateau from north to south, and intersecting at right angles others which conform to and follow the line of the gulch on either side and mark its eastern course to Black Hawk; a hodge-podge of frame and log buildings fronting on these streets, those on the upper sides resting on the banks, those on the lower depending for much of their support on slender stilts whose feet are fixed in the dirty gulch — all these intermingled in an irregular, tumble-down fashion, and varied by an occasional brick structure marking a spasmodic attempt at improvement; busy, bustling shops and warehouses of the class common to every mining town, with here and there a gilded beer saloon or a tawdry whiskey palace; on the north and west hill-sides, overlooking the busy streets, terraces of white frame hamlets, blinking in the sunlight, with here a church-spire, and there a school-house; on every other side the rocky hills, honey-combed with prospect holes, and tunnel openings, and yawning shafts, and dotted with jagged stumps and scrawny underbrush, marking where a forest had been before the exigencies of the mining industry had demanded its sacrifice for fuel, or forced it to give way to the various uncouth mine buildings, cabins, cribs and nondescripts which now in a scattering fashion occupy its place; at the foot of all, the crawling, leadenhued, murky stream, pursuing its sluggish course between the ragged sides of the gulch, in the channel cut by the placer miners of a few years back; and, save for the dark-hued, straggling patches of stunted pine covering a few distant peaks that stand out boldly against an ever-blue sky, and shut off the view in the far east — save for these, I say, not a tree, nor a flower, scarcely a leaf, to cheer the eye, or to temper the blare of the ever-beating sunshine on the whitey-brown hills.

Nothing very inspiring in such a picture, you may say, as the *local* for a sentimental history; yet such was the outer dress which Arcadia presented to the chance visitor of thirty years ago. (That was not a slip of the pen: the little book's title will have already shown you that I write "Arcadia" knowingly, but I am sure you will indulge me in the harmless conceit.) And while it has changed somewhat since, by the general substitution of brick and stone for the old cabins and frames of "the sixties," which the great fire swept away, and by the many added cottage homes of a later and fuller population, its natural features present much the same uninviting, cheerless picture now as then: the trees are as few, the gulch as foul, and the hill-sides as ragged and rocky as ever; yet let not the stranger from the metropolis therefore delude himself with the idea that he can take a round trip on the rail between breakfast and supper, and see the little mountain settlement as you and I knew it in its golden age. Not so: for besides Arcadia, there were the Arcadians — and now, they are not. Their places are filled by a new generation, to whom the Arcadians and their story are but a vague and shadowy tradition.

Walk the streets, you of the ancient time, and you will find strange faces and note unfamiliar ways. You may indeed now and then encounter William Williams or Thomas Thomas of Cornwall — but it was their fathers that you knew in the long ago, and you met them underground, while the son of to-day may be the man who will rent you a store-house on

Main street or a cottage on the hill-side. He has become a landed proprietor, or a mine lessee and an employer of men, and his old place below on the tenth level of the Bobtail or the Gunnell is taken by a son of sunny Italy or an "exile" from Austria. True, you may still hear "Trafalgar's Bay" or "The Wreck of the Arethusa" rolling out in the robust baritone of "Cousin Jack," about the time of the monthly pay-day, from behind the screen of the Main street saloon; but the old home-brewed beer of Eureka street has largely given place to the "chianti" of Italy, and strange names ending in "ini" abound on the sign-boards of the "bodegas" which formerly were carpeted with saw-dust and dedicated to Gambrinus, or on the mine pay-rolls where John Penglase or Thomas Trelawney once made their marks.

It is dinner time, perhaps, and you drift into the Teller House; but no word of welcome greets you from the few scattered guests as you pass table after table. They know you not, for few of them are "native here, and to the manner born;" indeed, most of them were doubtless going to school in this or that far-off Eastern town at the time when a half-hour in this old hall three times a day formed a part of your usual round. It is only when you reach the one table at the farther end, where are gathered the slender group that now represent nearly all the resident survivors of the old regime, that you feel that you are other than a stranger or an interloper; and even these few seem to be painfully dependent upon eye-glasses in assuring themselves of your identity.

The general features of the room itself are the same as of old. The "old masters"* look down on you from the walls, and were they portraits, you could no doubt easily fancy them nodding you a recognition as one of the clan; but being only lifeless, stupid landscapes, they can but mutely testify, by the dinginess of their coverings and the very perceptible accumulation of dirt and fly-specks, to the changes of time and to the gradual decay of the hall that was once, in its way, a centre of social life and cheer: for there was a time when these old walls were made to ring, on the daily assembling of the laughing, bustling crowds that were "wont to set the table on a roar," or that filled the room with warmth and brightness of an evening on the clearing up of the tables and chairs to make way for the merry measures of the "club dance," with Patz's fiddlers on an improvised platform at one end, forty couples on the floor, and another score ranged around the walls, waiting their chance of a place. To-day the room seems to you chilly and bare; its guests of a day come and go; they eat and are filled — perhaps; and, as far as may be, the house is fulfilling its purpose of utility; but it is no longer identified, as it once was, with the social life of the town, whatever that may be to-day. Its glory has departed.

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*It is only fair to say that, since the above was written, the old masters have been relegated to the garret, and the room brightened up generally, without, however, restoring the old familiar atmosphere.

You will be glad to return to the open air of the street, where you will not fail to note the restless industry that now pervades the place; and for the sake of some familiar figure that you may yet encounter here and there, whose fortunes are still closely linked with it, you will rejoice at the evidences of thriving business to be seen on every hand (although, as you may meet the marshal quietly escorting a pair or two of hard-looking tramps to the railroad station, to show them the way out of town, you are struck by the fact that this latter-day prosperity has not brought unmixed benefits in its train.) You cannot fail, however, to be impressed with the radical but indefinable change in the general atmosphere of the old place, and it is then that the memory will quietly get to work, and you will quickly recall, in spite of yourself, how different it all once was — that is, you who have lived there twenty-five or thirty years ago: for if you did, it is certain that your residence there, even though perhaps in a manner enforced, was an incident which you would not now wish to blot out from among the pleasant memories of your life.

It is true that for you and me it had nothing of the charm of youthful association or tradition; that we were all of us of more or less mature years before we ever saw the place; and that perhaps few ever had in view more than a temporary sojourn when the wave of the gold excitement bore us westward, and deposited us in that then far-off spot among the mountains. Yet, though the members of that little community of long ago have since scattered far and wide, to plant permanent abodes and set up their household gods among more inviting surroundings and in more pretentious places, still I venture the belief that if two Arcadians should accidentally meet in far-away Egypt, in the land of the midnight sun, or among the "isles of the sea," their reunion would owe much of its charm to the recalling and the recounting of the scenes and doings of by-gone days among the brown hills of the "little kingdom."

It was for years an isolated community, but composed of material that would have made life a pleasant story even on Crusoe's island.

It was utterly independent of its barren environment, and perhaps its excellences shone all the more by contrast with it, like a diamond in a rough setting. Modest and unpretentious enough in its outer aspects, it held a pardonable pride in the character of its social elements. A trifle conscious, perhaps, of its culture, and jealous of its repute, it still held undisputed sway whenever it assumed to lead; and it implies no reflection upon any other town of the State to-day to concede such a claim. It must be always remembered that in this booklet I am writing history of thirty years ago — a history of a little colony whose existence was begun and continued under conditions that were entirely exceptional, and that have long since passed away and are not now possible; and it was also because of those conditions, as will appear in the story, that there came gradually to be formed, in an isolated mountain canyon, with such a rough and uninviting natural exterior, a little social community of high intelligence, as homogeneous in its elements as it was unique not only in its location, but in the contrast which the charming interiors of its five or six score of homes presented to the uncouth and dreary outer surroundings of a mining camp.

Shall I illustrate one phase of these exceptional conditions? List, oh! list, ye Coloradan of these latter days, returning perhaps from your summer's "run" down to the Eastern sea-coast. As you speed across the great Plains on a "limited" express, spanning their many hundred miles in a short score of hours, while you recline at ease in a modern Pullman, and view through its broad window with a careless disdain the fleeting panorama of thriving towns, rich pastures and smiling farms; strong in the confidence that you will end your journey on time and without fatigue, let the winds blow high or blow low; and quick to resent any untoward happening that may threaten to affect your personal comfort or retard your progress — as you do this, I say, does it ever occur to you (if indeed you ever trouble yourself with a thought on the subject) that there may have been a time when this serenely comfortable order of things, that you accept now as a matter of course, had no place on these broad Plains?

Let us in fancy abandon your train — put it for the time out of service — and see if we can restore to our mental canvas a picture that is fast growing dim as the years flit by. Tear up the steel rails, burn the ties, and let the wild buffalo grass grow again in the trenches where these have lain. Blot from off the surface the pleasant farms, and the thrifty towns, even down to that suggestive little school-house out there on the remotest edge of the great prairie. Away with the fences, and down with those magnificent stands of wheat and those seas of waving corn, that you have lately found so "monotonous" for mile after mile from your car window. Now we have an unobstructed sweep of view, and we see — what? — a broad, brown plain, dotted with sage-brush and bunch-grass as far as the eye can reach, bounded on either hand at some miles' distance by low sand-hills which, curiously enough, you hadn't noticed before, but which again assume their place as prominent features of the landscape, now that you have brushed away the growth of thirty years.

In the centre of the picture runs the broad, shallow, glistening river, between flat, low banks, whose lines are marked by scarce a single tree. Near by, and often parallel with the course your luxurious train so lately travelled over, note the almost obliterated lines of a broad wagon-track, following the undulations of the plain, here climbing a "roll" of the prairie, and there dipping down and into and across a buffalo "wallow," while generally conforming to the east and west course of the river. Step with me into the centre of the old trail, and let us try the path afoot. How slow the pace, and what a difference in "the point of view" from your late lordly surroundings on the modern railway! How vast all at once has grown the sky above you, and how tremendous the sweep of the great plain! What a sense of distance, and how suggestive of toil, and hardship, and danger is the idea of attempting to span such a mighty waste!

Turn for a backward glance, and note the white canvas covers of a straggling line of wagons, heavily laden, and with a goodly complement of passengers and crew, plodding doggedly along at a pace which advances them perhaps a dozen or fifteen miles a day, yet all cheerful enough, and sturdy, and hope ful, and brave; although they have already put a month of good hard travelling behind them, and are still but half-way to their goal. As they turn off the trail to make camp for the night down there by the river, see the overland coach dash by them in gallant style with its half-dozen mules — the "limited express" of those days — attempting a record trip, perhaps, within the ordinary six days and nights of its working schedule; but always, mark you, keeping a watchful eye on those dull-looking sand-hills over there, which experience tells them may become suddenly alive with moving figures of paint-bedaubed and befeathered savage horsemen, who shall sweep down on the plain and dispute the passage of the road, force the travellers to turn their coach into a breastwork, and fight for their lives as best they may; or who may pounce upon that camp of wagoners by the riverside, when still in the heavy sleep of the early dawn, drive off their stock, and lay low the whole helpless company of men, women and little ones — how often has the pitiful story been written?

But by whatever various means, or with whatever experiences, startling or commonplace, the individual members of the little colony, during the several years in which they were gradually brought together, accomplished their journey westward, they found themselves, when they finally sat down in their happy canyon among the everlasting hills, seven hundred miles away from the end of the nearest railroad, and practically with outlet or inlet only in the one direction whence they had come — the country on the three other sides of them being almost a "terra incognita" for thousands of miles, north, west, south: eastward, there were always the great Plains to be spanned before any connection could again be made with the old home, or any news reach them of other scenes and other faces lately left behind.

And how often was even this means of comfort denied them! What more sorrowful legend than the simple words, "No Eastern Mail," so often displayed in the Post Office to a waiting, anxious, wistful crowd when the Indian was abroad on the Plains? Some there are still among you, indeed, who will remember the time in the earlier days when it was not until after a voyage on two oceans, and the long journey with mules over the Sierras and by the Great Salt Lake and down through their own rugged hills, that the accumulated mails of weeks, after having first vainly attempted the passage westward from "the River," finally reached them — by the back door, as it might be — after ten thousand miles of wanderings. Surely no more curious episode than this is to be noted among the many odd features that in the course of years were clustered about the history of the little mountain commune.

It was this constant menace to the overland trail from the savage red man, or the equally savage winter storm, that for a time affected the daily lives and doings of the mountain colonists down even to minute details. They were at the start purely a community of consumers, and depended almost for their very existence — for everything, in fact, that entered into their daily living — on the outside world that lay beyond the wild stretch of hostile plain; and the risks of transport were such that, for a long time at least, the commonest necessaries of life were often scarce and always costly, while material luxuries were impossible; and even when the latter became in course of time to some extent available, the colonists as a body were still compelled to forego much to which they had formerly been accustomed, or to accept whimsically grotesque substitutes offered by the novel conditions by which they were surrounded. They had brought with them, however, some books, some music, an occasional piano of uncertain age, many accomplishments, and all a fairly large experience of life, gained under good social conditions. With this equipment they were not likely to sit down idly and lament a few ungracious slaps of adverse fortune. Being for a time in more ways than one thrown upon their own resources, they quickly adapted themselves to their environment, and enjoyed and forced into service much of it that appealed to them of the comic or the humorous; while its serious or trying features (and there were such, occasionally) served but to draw them more closely together. In time they developed the best that was in them.

As the general settlement of the country slowly grew, they assumed to lead, and none ever questioned their right. Their domicile became known after a time as the "Little Kingdom of Gilpin"—a title extorted from fellow Coloradans outside their borders, because of their industrial progressiveness, their social prominence, and their influence in public affairs. As early as 1867 they sent a commissioner to the Paris Exposition, who gave the foreign world its first comprehensive idea of the value of Colorado minerals. In course of time, after the State's admission, they furnished to the nation three United States Senators, a Cabinet officer, and the State's single representative in Congress. Out of their modest grammar school on the mountain-side, they sent to West Point a cadet who, in sporting parlance, "smashed all records" ever made in that institution, and who in these latter days has gathered new laurels as a general officer in the Philippines.

These are but a few of many notable instances in which this modest little colony reached out from its remote mountain canyon and influenced affairs for thousands of miles beyond its borders; but it is not to boast of things like these that I have ventured upon this little booklet: it is rather to bring together in a few pages such reminiscences as have come to the surface at various times when members of the clan have met on this or that social occasion, and begun gossipping, as is their pleasant habit, of the days of "auld lang syne."

II.

The Early Days.

It is the winter of 1865-'6. Central is no longer a mining "camp." It counts nearly seven years of life, and has long ago passed out of the primary stages of surface diggings and moving population. It already has a history, written in brief but striking chapters. Its first two or three years as a camp have been very prosperous — so much so that its fame has penetrated far and wide, and in a time of exceptional money inflation has created such a craze for gold-mining investment as the country has never known. Joint-stock companies without number have come into the field and bought the mines; speculation has run riot, every mine has had its price, and for a second period of two or three years, the ease with which "claims" have been exchanged for greenbacks has paralyzed the mining industry. Every one has been so demoralized by this mania for "making sales," and growing suddenly rich without labor, that when at last this source of wealth has abruptly closed because of one of the periodical storms of the money market, the sudden reaction from the wild excitement of twenty-five or thirty months has been too much, and the camp has suffered from nervous shock from which it is slow to recover. Men who for months have been mentally counting their wealth in five or six figures — many who have actually refused for their holdings what meant to them competence for life — find it hard to see the prospect vanish in a night, and are slow to return to the old steady round of honest labor.

A heavy dullness has fallen upon the town. Many of the successful first proprietors have gathered in the profits of their mining sales, and drifted away, leaving nothing but their names, which have connected themselves in one way or another with the place, and are to remain as landmarks for years to come. Pat. Casey, the first "bonanza king," (whose achievements, however, would be considered small enough in later days,) with his meteoric career, is already a tradition. The new companies have sent out men from the East to manage their enterprises, and the work of deep mining has begun. The conditions are adverse, if not for the time impossible. Serious problems have been encountered, and a course of experiments has been entered upon, which is destined to continue for several years, to involve great expenditure, and to end largely in disaster. All this has had the good effect, however, of bringing out many men of professional education from widely separated parts of the country, who add largely to the mental calibre of the little town. The companies' agents, also, who have arrived in the last year and who are still coming, prove to be often men of wide general experience, even if not all especially fitted to solve the problems that confront them. Many have brought their families with them, others gradually follow one by one, and a little social community begins to take form. Meanwhile, from the standpoint of business, the town is for the time being dead, absolutely dead. It has, curiously enough, never been afflicted with the usual rough experiences of mining camps — lawlessness has never had a foothold here — and now it is as quiet as a New England village.

—— But politics are active, if business is not. The early population of the entire mining region, mistermed the "Pike's Peak country," is native American in a large degree, and before the settlement is a year old, it has already and successfully demanded partition into a new Territory; and now, with its first decade scarcely half passed, it has dreams of statehood, and, indeed, for a year has been rapping for admission. Of course there is an opposition party: "State" and "Anti-State" are the rallying cries, and politics are at fever heat in "the little kingdom." This fall and winter of 1865 we have had three distinct elections here — one of them for State officers, and one for the

Legislature which is to meet in the winter and choose United States Senators for the State that is not yet to be. The aggressive and brilliant Hollister, from his sanctum in Black Hawk, is leading the fight for statehood in his *Mining Journal*, which is the recognized chief among the Territorial newspapers, whether their specialty be news, mining or politics. The journals of Denver and elsewhere wait for him to strike the keynote, and then "come following after."

The contest is in the main a good-natured one, however, and the continuous diversion it has created for the last few months has proved a god-send to the depressed colony. In the third election, whatever their earlier attitude towards statehood, all parties come into the field to compete for a share of the spoils, if the fates should decree our admission; and many and curious are the tickets and platforms which are offered to the consideration of the electors. Deacon John Walker presents himself for Congress as an independent candidate, and in support of his claim upon the suffrages of his fellow-citizens, declares himself in favor of "women's rights, gold-bearing lodes, free drinks and Freiberg pans; also all disintegrating and desulphurizing processes, without let, hindrance or remorse, and without regard to smells;" and "most of all I will insist upon the substitution of an automatic wheelbarrow for the ox now employed in transporting the mails to and from the States."

John Turck, of powder fame, although originally an "Anti," accepts a nomination for the Legislature, and brings down upon himself a storm of badinage, of which this is a fair sample:

> "At midnight, in his powder-house,
> The Turck was dreaming of the hour
> When pro-State men, in suppliance bent,
> Should tremble at his power."

There is no difficulty in marshalling voters to the polls. Everybody votes at all the elections, and without the officious scrutiny or fussy restrictions of an Australian ballot or other impertinent modern inventions. Whoever gets the most ballots in the box is the best man, whether his supporters be those of "a local habitation and a name," or just arrived to-day with a bull-team from off the Plains. All are independent Americans, who are not to be defrauded of their rights, and mean to exercise them how and when and where they please. Black-Hawkers vote in Central, and Centralites, not to be outdone in courtesy, return calls and vote in Black Hawk: and when the results are declared, he must be a rash man indeed who would suggest a contest.

—— The Drama flourishes: not the shallow creation of a later day, embodying the inane, vapid talk and happenings of an empty-headed, faddish society — nor the thinly veiled indecencies of the "realistic" presentment — nor yet the jumble of coarse horse-play, athletics, Amazons, song and dance and general hodgepodge of the modern socalled "vaudeville" — by no means any of these: but the good old orthodox melodrama, such as our fathers loved, with its heroine and its villain, its sharply contrasted lights and shadows, and its certain final triumph of virtue; or the sterling English comedy of the olden time, with its ruddy-faced baronet, its lost will, and eldest son, and loyalty tenantry, with the ancient family portraits on the walls of the old hall, and a general flavor of old crusted port; or the "screaming farce," such as "Toodles" or "Box and Cox"—light, rollicking, natural. These, and everything in fact in the whole range of "the legitimate," we have nightly, in a comfortable log structure built into the hill at the foot of Main street, and managed by as talented a pair of originals as ever united their fortunes on the mimic stage:—"Jack" Langrishe and "Mike" Dougherty.

Langrishe is a gentleman, to begin with, and as a manager, is genial, intelligent and able; a born comedian, and possessed of one feature which alone would insure success in his line to a less gifted man—a nose, of a size, shape and mobility which when it is "in commission" capture the house at once by their droll effects, without the aid of a spoken word.

His partner, Dougherty, is an actor of varied gifts, who will to-night impersonate "Nick of the Woods," perhaps — or play "first old man," such as the sturdy, honest old yeoman who in tragic rage discards his degenerate son; or to-morrow will sing you a topical song of his own composition, at which, and at dramatic construction, he is very apt. Last winter, indeed, his facility in dramatizing well-nigh brought him to grief, and at the hands of his own fellow countrymen, who, when he attempted to produce "Pat. Casey's Night-Hands," added a touch of realism that the author had not contemplated, by a demonstration in such force in the public streets that a riot was averted only by a surrender to the narrow prejudices of the night-hands themselves, who didn't appreciate such samples of the broad humor of the intended production as had leaked out beforehand.

Harry Richmond is the leading man, and a very capable one, of this versatile company, and Mrs. Langrishe the leading lady, but as she is rather mature, and sensible enough to know it, she willingly divides the honors with Mary Rickords, lately from Chicago, young and attractive. "Mlle. Laurent" (whose name at home is Mrs. Eastman) comes on in a *pas seul* between the acts, and fills in as a soubrette in the play. Dick Wilmot is an experienced actor of high-class comedy, who would shine behind metropolitan footlights, and there are the Irwins, and Mrs. Fitzwilliams, and dear old McClellan, ("little Mac,") verging on fourscore, whose quavering voice is so uncertain that he never comes on without a mouthful of lozenges, (which are sometimes comically in evidence,) but who clings to the boards for the need as well as the love of it, and counts everyone in the house as his friend — as indeed they all do, for surely a more popular company of able, congenial, decent-living strollers — not barn-stormers by any manner of means — never came together on the frontier or anywhere else, and solicited public support with so much merited success. And they give us generous return for our money — a change of bill daily, and a satisfying variety each evening. Everything in the entire range, from tragedy to farce: to-night it will be "Young Lochinvar," (with a real horse on the stage,) and a trifle of English comedy, such as "She Stoops to Conquer;" to-morrow a stirring melodrama, relieved by a light farce; on Saturday night Richmond will perhaps practice on us with "Macbeth" or "Richard," and rarely is it that we are dismissed before midnight.

We have a six weeks' season of this, and then Denver has its turn; after which they pack up their trunks and flit away for a thousand miles, to far Montana, and in due time back again to their first love — for Central seems to hold the warmest place in their hearts. The marvel is, how they can stand the physical strain, in these days of stage-coaching and "roughing it," and how they pay their way, even with the generous patronage they enjoy at our hands. But they appear to be always the same happy-go-lucky, careless Bohemians, troubling themselves little about to-morrow, and, taking counsel of old Horace, "enjoying the day for what it brings." It must be a happy temperament indeed which can endure the constant companionship of Babcock and his orchestra of three pieces, who are an appendix to the company, and travel with them hither and yon. These have exactly two musical works in their repertoire — composer unknown, but no doubt dead long ago from remorse — and each of these does service as overture, turn and turn about, on alternate nights; if an interlude is needed, a few bars from either fill the bill; or perhaps music "incidental to the play," whether it be a dance on the green, or "slow music" when the villain dies — in either case the fiddles saw away at a section of whichever score happens to be on top at the time. The effect is anguish to the musical temperament, and the act usually kindles an intense desire on the part of the house to call in the sheriff, (who indeed is no other than Billy Cozens, and who is usually at the outer door taking tickets;) but this would imply a possible disturbance, and we are first of all a peace-loving, as well as a law-abiding, people. Being largely American, we are also long-suffering, and thus far we have meekly submitted, without protest.

——Our literary predilections soon manifest themselves. The pioneers of various religious societies had followed close upon the trail of the placer miners in their first invasion of this Gregory gulch, and now after these few intervening years we have several flourishing churches among us, some of which are already settled in comfortable and permanent buildings of their own. Among these are the always aggressive Methodists, and their present shepherd is Brother Vincent, active, genial and extremely popular among all classes, whether in or out of his own sect. To him is due the honor of creating a Library Association, of small beginnings, perhaps, but from which, and from its more elaborate successor, much healthful intellectual activity and some surprising literary talent are in time to be developed for the public benefit. He has gathered together a few hundred books for circulating purposes in a small up-stairs room on Lawrence street, and as an adjunct to his library, has already inaugurated a "lecture season," which should be noteworthy because of its disclosure of a poet among us. Wade — Birdseye B. Wade, the law partner of our friend Ed. Salisbury, has the honor of opening the season, and the felicity of publicly reading an original poem. He shows a proper sense of the critical character of his audience, and treats them with becoming deference in his opening lines:

"To write a poem for the delectation
Of the inhabitants of Central City,
Is surely cause for inward trepidation —
So thought I when informed by a committee
Of the St. James Library Association."

His subject is "Pike's Peak," and in pleasing diction and swinging metre he tells the story of the gold discovery, and of the happenings of the settlement down to date. It is indeed voted so good a production that he is persuaded to give it to the publisher; and he not only "tastes the joys of printer's ink," but also of a pleasing addition to his income for the time being from the ready sale of the work after it is put between covers. We are proud of our poet. He is one of us — he belongs to us — and as a community we assume the right to bask in the lustre of his renown, as it is unwittingly spread abroad through the pirating of his production, in whole or in part, by the journals of Denver and other equally less favored sections of the Territory.

—— Socially, we have made great advances this winter, for the first time. It is a long and stormy season: the snows lie deep on the mountain-sides, the skies are gray, and the sun is languid in climbing the eastern hills of a morning, so that the winter day seems unusually short. In the present general apathy the demands of business are not pressing, and we soon pass naturally into the habit of a ten-o'clock breakfast, while the evening lamps are alight by four. This makes long nights, and inclines us all the more to get together in some snug meeting-place and pool our resources so as in various pleasant ways to gently urge along the evening hours. Our numbers are still small, but are receiving welcome accessions at short intervals. There are several choice bachelor "messes," the members of which are not slow to open their quarters and entertain in their turn those of the gentler sex whose houses have already become favorite points of assembly; and of these latter we may count perhaps a dozen, and however they may vary in other respects, they are uniform in the fact at least of their doors, figuratively speaking, being always unbarred, or the latch-string hanging outside: that is, and has been from the first, a point of honor and a distinguishing feature of this little community.

Up Nevada gulch, just under the shadow of Quartz hill, is a composite building, quite pretentious in its two stories, and in its white painted exterior of frame, which conceals the "log-cabin" half of it which comprised its original dimensions. Standing as it does at the head of the gulch, on a point of land overlooking the town, it appears, viewed from below, like a beacon when its windows are alight of an evening; and so indeed it serves to the file of young and old bachelors who nightly climb the rocky road that skirts the straggling gulch. It is separated from the road by a bridge, and we must stop a bit before crossing, for here stands the cabin of Dick Kellett — "little Dick" — who has been here since that fabled time of fine weather, "the spring of '60." Dick is the volunteer sexton of, and a pious worshipper in, St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, whose building down Lawrence street, perched upon frail stilts and overhanging the unsavory gulch, is scarcely as imposing as its name. Dick is also Rector Jennings' right-hand man, an impulsive, warm-hearted, bigoted, hospitable little Irishman, who believes in his church and his bishop before all things else in the world — and next to these, in his understanding of the cardinal virtues, is that of hospitality; and he would take it as a mortal affront if we should pass his usually open door without dropping in on him. His house is but a log cabin, to be sure, but its interior is of wonderful neatness, the woodwork, floor and sides finished to a polish, and the sideboard glistening, although with but a few simple pieces of glassware; for Dick is not rich except in the generous impulses of his warm Irish heart. His cabin is and always has been one of the "show places" of the town, and there have as yet been none of the little social world of the place who have felt themselves above being entertained there by him in his own modest way, and there are few of them indeed whom he fails to number among his friends.

Dick will go with us over the bridge to the white house, for he is a welcome guest there as everywhere. The place is full of light and cheer; and since last fall, when its young mistress arrived with her mother from New York, to join those of her family who have been keeping bachelors' hall here, there has been scarcely a night when it has not been the centre of high festival of some kind, from a "candy pull" to an improvised dance. Music has been and still is largely a feature, for the young lady has brought her piano out with her, and is an accomplished performer. The repertoire, both vocal and instrumental, is perhaps more broadly comprehensive than severely classical; and I will not deny that we sometimes hear the wailing of the "Maiden's Prayer" and the sing-song measures of the "Mabel Waltzes" insinuating themselves here and there through the informal programme; but these are mere details, and we are neither critical nor exacting. The general effect is one of spontaneous hilarity evolved naturally from hearty *camaraderie* and good fellowship.

There are indeed times when the house is quiet and soberly dark, but this is usually because its inmates have gone to assist in raising high jinks elsewhere. There are cozy parlors down in town where the assemblies vary somewhat in their composition, and the fun perhaps takes a different turn, although equally unrestrained and free from ceremony. In one especially favorite gathering place, there is a larger sprinkling of grave and reverend seigneurs, and of dashing military men only recently detached, and still strongly suggestive of "the war." Here "the elephant" is nightly exhibited, and charades and games amuse and edify the younger members. The elders solace themselves with whist or cribbage; while the hostess, herself a singer of fine natural gifts and high cultivation, gathers about her on special evenings all available Arcadians of a musical turn, and the result is often a vocal concert of a high order: for be it understood we have already several voices among us of such quality and culture as would secure an attentive audience anywhere. One of her most valuable coadjutors is Darby, with a rich, musical tenor, an extensive repertoire, and a sense of the humorous such as is the natural heritage of a son of the Emerald Isle. He is withal a gentleman both by birth and education, and his resources are always obligingly at the service of his hostess. If allowed to select his own numbers, he will sing for you in the same evening "Kitty of Coleraine," "Norah, the Pride of Kildare," the "Sweet Vale of Avoca," and "The Potato

Famine"—any or all of them. Perhaps the latter gives both himself and his audience the most genuine enjoyment. Here is one of many verses:

"They say there is Holloway's pills
  Cured a shockin' bad leg of Jim Brady's,
An', since they cure all sorts of ills,
  Why, maybe they'd cure the pit-ta-tees,
    And get rid of these terrible times."

Then, with an indescribable wave of his hand, and an irresistible bow:

"If there's any young lady here now
  Who would wish for to change her condition,
I'd set meself close to her ear,
  And whisper me tender petition"—

Here follows an "aside" to some young man of the company:

"What I'd say to her's nothing to *you*,
  But—it wouldn't be about the pit-ta-tees!"

Do not imagine that I am disposing in a page or two of all the people and all the methods by which we "keep the pot boiling" socially. These are but typical sketches, illustrative as far as they go. Other houses there are (altho' to be sure their number is as yet somewhat limited) in which one receives the same warm welcome, and within which we are equally glad to gather. Occasionally it is true that our ingenuity is taxed at times to vary the character of the entertainment, but thus far every demand of that kind has been met with such surprisingly satisfactory responses as to indicate that we have as yet by no means exhausted our inventive capacities.

Rather is it in other ways that we are likely to develop any poverty of resource — as, for instance, when host or hostess examines the larder to determine what sort of material refreshment can be offered the guest at the coming evening's assembly. It is then that one is constantly reminded of the iron-bound restrictions forced upon us by our isolation. We who are largely from the Eastern sea-coast, and accustomed to a profuse abundance and generous variety of sea-foods, have from the first found it difficult to extract much enjoyment or indeed any high degree of nutriment from such dainties, for instance, as sardines and "cove" oysters; but they are a part of our staples, and help to eke out the slender variety of foods within whose range we must supply the daily table, and we each consume our weekly or monthly quota from the cargo of the last bull-train as cheerfully and with as little unnecessary comment as possible. Now there may be some benighted spot on the earth where these things rank as delicacies; but it will require a strong effort of the imagination on the part of one's guests, similarly circumstanced as to daily living, to regard either of these as in any way a *bonne bouche*, should they be offered them under such false pretenses, in whatever guise one might attempt to dress them, as a part of an evening's conventional "refreshments."

Likewise, one would be charmed to put fruits on his table, but the choice is quite as restricted. Dried apples are a necessary evil, "canned peaches" have become a by-word and an abomination, and other varieties we know not of, nor has the sight of any gladdened our eyes since we left the land "beyond the River." True, there is a tradition in the camp that a lovelorn swain last year squandered five dollars to secure for his Dulcinea a like number of "fresh" peaches that somehow found their way here from Salt Lake; but who brought them, or what became of the rest of the cargo, has never been told. In like manner, also, it is said of a reckless mine-owner that at Christmas a year ago he parted with twenty dollars that a turkey might adorn his dinner table — one of a crop of two that a valley ranchman succeeded in raising; the other was captured by some Denver Crœsus.

But these are merely eccentric instances that, each in its turn, served as a "nine days' wonder;" as a community, we have no acquaintance with such luxuries. The one familiar daily staple of our tables is beef. The same patient old ox that has just hauled the cove oysters, and the sardines, and the dried apples, and the canned peaches — boxes, and barrels and bales of them — over the Plains — this faithful old servant has no sooner arrived, bony, battered, and bruised, from a daily pulling and whacking of two or three months, than he goes meekly to the shambles, to become in sections, in very literal truth, the *piece de resistance* of the various tables of the town. He is cut up this way and that, and his various parts subjected to ingenious manipulation with a hatchet in the secret recesses of the boarding-house kitchen, so that they may come to the table under the guise of seductive names such as distinguish his aristocratic stall-fed relative in the East — but all in vain: we recognize him, and are bound to accept him — or go hungry.

And so with all the various dried and concentrated and condensed abominations of fish, flesh and fruit which enter largely into our stock of provisions: we eat them daily, and, if truth be told, we manage to sustain life very well with them, although, as I have said, it would seem hopeless to attempt to pass them off upon one another as delicacies, however one might dress them; yet, in spite of all, it is rare indeed that the hostess of an evening fails by some mysterious womanly cunning to set before her guests a table covered with more or less tempting dishes. And as for liquids, coffee is the staple, and our mountain housekeepers are past masters — or mistresses — in the art of making it. It's "the wine of the country" in these rocky hills whose scanty soil yields gold, not grapes. Sometimes, indeed, through a mistaken kindness, our hostess has attempted to vary the entertainment by substituting or adding a "lemonade" — a rare cup indeed in a country where a lemon is as yet a stranger. Some Eastern fiend, in league with the dentists, conceived the idea of putting up citric acid in cans for export to this can-beridden country; it seemed so delightfully simple: drop a spoonful of this white powder in a glass of water, and — there you are! Even with water at fifty cents a barrel — as we have it delivered daily at the door by the man with the big tank, and the long hose, and the pair of mules — there would seem to be none in the colony so poor but they could henceforth have lemonade on any and all occasions; and the addition of the new canned specialty was at first hailed with delight in our restricted market. It was introduced with pride to many of our "refreshment" tables before its execrably vile qualities were exposed and appreciated; and then it was so quickly and thoroughly tabooed that we have reason to believe, as we certainly hope, that, as a commercial speculation, it has met the fate it deserved.

—— We keep the Christmas festival joyously and for the pure love of it, and we celebrate New Year's Day with loyal regard to the fashion of the old communities from which we sprung. Not even in old England itself is heartier or more willing homage paid to Father Christmas, although we sadly lack in some ways the means for giving it proper expression. Not a home within the town, however modest or humble its exterior, but conveys some suggestion of Christmas cheer within; nor a miner's cabin, however remote or isolated, but makes some recognition of the day, if by no more than a spray of evergreen cut from some scrub of a tree on the mountain-side, and fixed in place over the door. You will notice a fine touch of nature in the grizzled veteran of a prospector, who comes into town for the holiday week on almost his sole annual visit, and indulges himself in the dissipation of squandering his hard-earned dollars on trifles for the children, whom he delights to follow as they make the rounds of the few shops that represent Santa Claus and his manufactures. The zealous young rector of St. Paul's, who believes first of all in good works, and is himself a noble and vigorous exponent of his creed, rounds up all the little ones of his own flock and all the estrays he chances upon by the wayside, and gathers them in to hold high revel around a mighty Christmas tree that some one has hauled in for him from among the pines under "the Range" several miles away, and that willing and clever feminine hands have dressed and hung full of all manner of such trinkets as bring joy to the youthful heart, many of which are of home construction from scant material. And not the young ones only, but every one who will, shares in the general Christmas cheer, which is liberally dispensed according to their means by all the churches, and alike by men of all creeds and of no creeds.

"New Year's" is the one festal day of all the year that really shares with Christmas in the popular esteem, and this, as I have said, we observe according to the ancient traditions. From the extreme upper end of the long canyon, at Nevada, to its lower end at Black Hawk, on the terraced hill-side or below along the town's roadway, you will notice house after house hospitably open, and from noon till midnight callers singly and in groups dropping in here and there to offer good wishes on the advent of the new year. Many of the houses are but cabins, it is true, and some even lack the crowning grace of the feminine presence; but in none can you fail to be impressed with a strong sense of the hearty good fellowship that marks and enlivens the whole scene, and that I shall always insist is one of the conspicuous virtues of this little community.

III.

Two Years Later.

We move along for a year or two, with but little change. We have indeed steadily added to our numbers in a quiet way, so that our little social world may perhaps count five or six score people, who are domiciled under much fewer than half that number of hospitable roofs. The camp (I use the term for convenience, to signify the entire mining district) has slowly shaken off the apathy that followed the great speculation and the sudden collapse. Experiment, which has been indulged in to the last degree of exaggeration, and which has been in a sense hardly less demoralizing than the "claim" selling, has finally given way to sensible effort and a return to old and tried, though perhaps less seductive, methods in the way of mining and ore reduction; and to some extent we already feel the benefit of the change. Many costly and fantastic constructions have gone to swell the junk-heaps of the foundries, and this, together with the last rites attending the forced closing out of many of the operating "process" companies by the sheriff, has not been altogether without its pathetic features.

The work of clearing up the debris and making a fresh start is necessarily slow, partly because of the continuance of certain unfavorable conditions not under our control. These will not be wholly removed until the advent of that railroad which is some day to span the great Plains. It has long been one of our day dreams, and lately indeed we have begun to hear vague reports of it from time to time. It is now even said, in the cant phrase of the newspapers, to be approaching us "in giant strides;" but we have hitherto taken a great deal of this on trust. We know of some of the gray-headed pioneers of the camp who are awaiting its arrival at Denver, and who drily express the hope that they may live long enough to go down there and look upon a train of cars, and discover what manner of animal a locomotive really is; yet they seem to be harassed by doubts. They have lived their lives "beyond the Mississippi," and have moved westward with each successive advancement of the frontier. Their ideal "express" travelling is fully realized by the daily Concord coach, with its six horses, and with Jake Hawk or "Old Tennessee" on the box, that arrives on the edge of the evening with the Eastern mails, (and too often without them,) and whose coming is still the event of the day, bringing the street crowd together, and exciting much speculative gossip when any strange faces appear among its usual dozen or more of passengers: for there is a fable prevalent in the camp that all new-comers are capitalists, travelling *incog.*, with insidious designs of stealing marches on one another, in their grasping eagerness to acquire options upon unsold mines, in anticipation of the "boom" that is certain to visit us again any day — without notice; and there are still many among the mining yeomanry who continue to view work with disfavor, and to hug the delusion that the "sale" which was just about completed when the crash came, has been only postponed for a season.

In this spring of 1867 it must be said, however, that the general skepticism regarding the railroad has received something of a shock, when Will Cushman returns from Chicago and announces that he has made the trip to Central in eight days and some odd hours — a feat which causes more wonderment and discussion than any mining strike in this vicinity for the last six months. It is a "record" trip, and means not only that a big gap has finally been closed in Iowa by the Northwestern railroad, but that the rails must even have indeed advanced a considerable distance west of "the River." It suggests great possibilities, and we wonder if, after all, we may not some day, in the yet indefinite future, actually be able to reach the Eastern sea-coast in a week of continuous travelling. This, we say, will be an experience worth waiting for.

Yet, even while we begin to enjoy in anticipation such a blissful condition of things, under which we shall some time end our extreme and peculiar isolation, or at least be able to modify it at will, we are forcibly reminded that the journey down to "the River" has not yet become one of entirely unalloyed pleasure; and, except forced to travel by business or other emergencies, there are few who are willing, for the present at least, to attempt to break Cushman's record; for he has barely arrived home when, after months of ominous rumors, like the mutterings of a coming thunder-storm, the Indians suddenly break out along the Platte, and from the Kiowa all the way down to O'Fallon's Bluffs they resume their time-honored pastime of slaughtering the helpless families of the stations, and holding up the stage-coaches whenever they find them so poorly manned as to make them an easy prey—for the red man is not often so recklessly brave as to fail to calculate the chances.

This latest raid has especial interest for us from the fact of the dire mishap that befalls one of the clan — no other than Rector Fuller, of Nevada, a quiet, refined, scholarly gentleman, who toward the end of May, just before the outbreak, leaves his peaceful little mountain parish on a long-planned visit to his Eastern home. He happens to be the only passenger on that especial trip — for, as I have said, travel has become timid because of the thickening rumors in the air — and he shares the coach only with a great pile of mail-bags, felicitating himself, no doubt, on his abundance of room, and on the happy chance by which he can make up a comfortable bed nightly in the long stretch down to North Platte, the temporary "end of the track." The driver is alone on the box, but the coach has an escort of two armed horsemen, in the pay of the stage company.

Fuller has a quiet, leisurely time enough for a day or two, when suddenly, one fine Sunday morning in June, in passing a roadside cabin, his reveries are harshly interrupted by the discordant yells of a band of painted savages, who have been concealed by the house and among the sand-pools, and who ride around the coach and, without warning, bore it full of holes with balls shot from modern rifles, which have recently been furnished them by a paternal government. The armed escort, with quick recognition of nature's first law, promptly turn their horses' heads and disappear in a gallop. The driver drops from his box with a bullet through his heart, and the double team, released from control and mad with fright, plunge ahead at a rate altogether at variance with the demands of their daily schedule. Fuller, with a perfectly cool head, climbs through the coach window and on to the roof, and then down and over the box, and out on the pole, to secure the reins which have dropped from the dead driver's hand. Here he becomes the target for all the guns at short range, and it is next to incredible that the balls, which generously perforate his clothes, should so entirely slight his body as they do. Still the ordeal is a trying one, and, combined with the swaying of the coach, proves too much for him, for he falls off the pole, under the horses' heels and in front of the wheels, one of which passes over his leg.

For some inscrutable reason — unless it be that he is thought so nearly dead that he can be scalped at leisure — the red devils ignore him for the moment and dart forward in chase of the coach, which is rocking and rolling along like a mad thing. Perhaps the soft sand of the roadway saved his leg, for he picks himself up, and finding that he is still fairly intact, he stands not upon the order of his going, but with due diligence fixes a course for the river, a hundred yards away. Sore as he is, he laboriously works his way along the bank, screening himself as well as possible from the sight of the savages, who, however, are too intent on the plunder of the coach and the live stock to follow him, until he finally increases his distance to a couple of miles. Here he stops for a rest, but descrying two horsemen coming towards him along the road whom he believes to be Indians and who hail him, he plunges into the river, fearing a decoy, and swims out a few hundred feet before stopping to inspect them too closely. Happily he soon discovers them to be bluecoats, and returns to the river-bank, where they gather him up, exhausted and in sadly dilapidated condition, and convey him safely to Fort Sedgwick, not far distant, whence in time he resumes his journey; and he finally reaches his Eastern home, perhaps no worse bodily for his strange adventure.

I recount this at some length, not only — aside from the interest of the story itself — to show the "stuff" Fuller has in him, but that also because of this he so well typifies the class to which he belongs. There are the spires of at least a half-dozen churches in the three little towns that form the mining community of which Central is the "hub;" and these churches, all of them active and strong, are led by men who are products of the colleges, every one of them, and who, also, are here of their own choice, and from the same spirit of enterprise which has brought other men here in other lines of effort. They are manly men of brain and education, aggressive and progressive, ambitious to be in the van of the march of progress westward; and they exert a very decided influence in this community of miners, merchants, traders, and men of many other sorts and conditions, who with or without families number certainly several thousand, and who also, as I have before recorded, are as quiet and well-ordered as any mining population anywhere on this broad earth, and indeed, let me add now, as the people of any century-old provincial town of the agricultural districts of Eastern America.

This attack upon Fuller's coach is but one of a score of savage outrages which usher in an Indian war that is to last all summer, and the immediate effect of which is to rouse the whole Territory to the highest pitch of excitement. The Governor demands help from Washington, and a very tart telegraphic correspondence ensues between him and General Sherman, the present head of the

Western Military Department, who is for a time inclined to treat the crisis with disdain, and the reports of Indian outbreak as the wild imaginings of nervous travellers, or the fabrications of restless frontiersmen, set afloat to cover up their own misdoings. Volunteers are called for at home, and at Central the local journal bristles with calls for "Minute Men!" and "To Arms!" In less than a week two entire companies are enrolled in the three little towns, but, much to their disgust, their services cannot be made available because of the Governor's inability to supply them with horses, and they soon disband.

Meanwhile, the Indians themselves, having full swing for the time being, become so recklessly hilarious in their efforts to sweep the whites from off the face of the Plains, that the military branch of the Federal Government is at last reluctantly forced to recognize the fact, and measures are taken which in time throw a protecting arm over the great highway. Coaches are doubled up and run tri-weekly between the "end of the track" and Denver, with escorts of heavily-armed guards, but it is well along in the fall before the hostiles are again brought under control, and travel attended with a full measure of comfort and safety; yet, in spite of it all, new-comers every now and then filter through, and become permanent accessions to the mountain colony.

—— The Library Association of two years ago has given way to the more elaborate scheme of a "Miners and Mechanics' Institute," which, after much travail and many enthusiastic open meetings during the entire winter, is fairly launched in the spring. The enterprise has already proved a public benefactor, in the very process of its creation, and (in the absence of Langrishe) has furnished much diversion, besides introducing to the public notice many unsuspected orators and parliamentarians. The luxury of membership is to cost ten dollars a year, yet fully two hundred signatures are obtained when the roll is submitted, and a very fair proportion of these prove "stayers" when the treasurer makes his rounds and asks for tangible evidence of the good faith of the signers. There is to be a public library with a reading room, both of generous proportions; a great mineral cabinet is to be built up of home contributions; technical mining papers and essays are to be prepared for the weekly meetings; but the crowning feature of all is to be a course of lectures each season, and for these we expect to provide native talent whenever we fail to capture any notables *en route* across the continent.

Any doubt as to our ability on this latter point never enters into the discussion. Indeed, if we have one especially distinguishing characteristic, I may venture to say it is this supreme confidence in ourselves and our resources. At the same time, we have always discovered a proper taste for celebrities from without our borders, and have been exceptionally fortunate in gathering in any lions found wandering about our section of these everlasting hills; for, whatever the occasion that has brought them within reach, we have as a rule seized them and forced them to pay toll. The settlement indeed was barely a month old, and few of the forest trees laid low, when it entertained the great and only Horace Greeley with coffee and flapjacks at the foot of Gregory gulch, and then gathered together a thousand or two bronzed and bearded miners to give him audience, after he had been filled with testimony as to the indubitable fact of "paying diggings at Pike's Peak," that he might spread it abroad throughout the land when he left us — which he did. That is history. Some years later came the Speaker of the National House and the Vice President of the United States, who had the privilege of addressing, from the steps of the bank in the centre of the town, "as intelligent and appreciative an audience as it was often their good fortune to meet;" at least they said so, and they ought to know.

Last year we caught Bayard Taylor, *en passant*, and coerced him into a lecture at the court-house; and, as we paid him for his talk, and besides introduced him to our own bard, who presented him with a copy of the original poem on "Pike's Peak," gratis, it was hardly gracious of him to insert a sting in the tail of one of his published letters from Central, charging it with being the "most outrageously expensive town" he had yet found in his wanderings. Then Grace Greenwood, happening to stray this way not long after, was forced (in a gentle way) to pay tribute — which she did very graciously, however. And now that we hear that "Boz" is coming again to view the land which showered its hospitalities upon him a quarter-century ago, and received in return, in overflowing measure, his callow criticisms upon its people and their manners, we are minded to show him that we are ready to recognize Genius, even though it will sometimes don the ass's skin. After a quiet canvass, we find we can afford to offer him five hundred dollars for the privilege of listening to him and looking upon him in the flesh, and we so advise his manager through the mails; and we are much put about when we learn that his itinerary will not permit him to come within a matter of twelve hundred miles of us. Nevertheless, we have thus put it on record that we have in a sense interviewed the great man — come within speaking distance of him, you may say; and while our literary pride is soothed by the knowledge that if he has not actually visited Central, it is from no fault of ours, we feel that he perhaps has missed a great opportunity of adding some choice studies to his repertoire, which might avail him greatly, should he continue in his occupation of making books and — caricatures.

We have made one prize capture, however, in this fall of 1867, that we regard with extreme complacency and a gratified pride: not one, but a pair of notables, whose rather prolonged stoppage with us *en route* — indeed, whose visit and return visit after a short interval elsewhere — has an especial significance in marking us as the objects of an unusual courtesy. They are Colonel Heine, of the Berlin Imperial School of Mines, and M. Simonin, of Paris, one of the most distinguished of French savants, both fresh from the recently ended Paris Exposition.

We — not of the Territory, but we of the "little kingdom" — have reason to appropriate the compliment of their presence; for isn't our own clansman, Maynard, or his alternate, Whitney, the commissioner who has all the summer been representing the great Colorado gold region over there, and haven't these eminent travellers stopped on their way especially to tell us all about it, and of the amazement of the Parisians and of their tourist guests from all over the world at seeing our wonderful mineral cabinet, and learning for the first time of the rare enterprise and numberless other virtues of this remote little Rocky Mountain hamlet? Since hearing them, we are convinced that, if that railroad should really get to work in earnest, and promptly close the still broad gap of the Plains, we might with good reason fear such an army of gold-hunters and mine-buyers and over-hungry tourists as might fairly overtax our resources; so perhaps it is as well to let matters run along as they will (it being doubtful, moreover, whether we can influence them anyway.)

We listen with wonder to what Heine tells us of the actual railroad achievements thus far, and with incredulous amusement at his fanciful prophecies of the future, when the transcontinental train will halt, say, at Salt Lake, and the conductor will call on his passengers to "Change cars for the City of Mexico!" or "All out for Hudson's Bay and the Arctic Circle!" We vote him exceedingly funny (but with a mental reservation that he is extremely visionary) when he thus tickles our fancy, with a score of variations, on more than one evening as we assemble *en masse* to greet him and his distinguished scientific friend. The latter, when his turn comes, handles a serious subject with somewhat more of dignity, and indulges himself in no such extravagant flights as his jolly comrade; but conscientiously, and as a matter of duty, he tells us the story of the great Exposition, and of the enviable place occupied by Colorado — that is to say, Central — in the mineral department; and then gives us the results of his investigations thus far in the Territory itself, and we listen with bewilderment to the long catalogue of minerals which he assures us are hidden away somewhere in our mountains, and will some day make their appearance as the country is gradually developed; and when we finally part, it is with a greatly enlarged opinion of ourselves and our prospects. We feel that "we are the people:" — the French Academy hath so decreed.

—— The native talent brought out by the lecture programmes of the Institute has as a rule covered itself with honors in its first season, and so continues with credit long after our foreign friends have left us. Still the Institute has to be nursed along more or less, like all such undertakings; and passing on to the next year it finds some special effort necessary to get its finances into healthier condition. Direct appeals to the pockets of the people are never extremely popular, nor are they satisfactory as a rule in their results; and for a time the staid and sober high officials are in somewhat of a quandary over ways and means. It will never do to let the rumor get abroad — especially among those illiterate people of the valley town — that the Institute is already languishing in its high purposes for failure of proper support or of the public enthusiasm, and something must be done. It is then that the younger element discover their opportunity and seize it. The public shall be made to come forward in its support, willy-nilly — and shall be wheedled out of its dollars by tickling its funny-bone.

The time is propitious. Langrishe has been away for many moons, and much of what we have had lately of professional theatricals has been spasmodic in its appearances, and of more or less doubtful quality. Church fairs and sociables, like the poor, we have always with us, and although presented in alluring garb, and each time with many changes of detail, even they begin to pall. The public — even our small "public"—demand something novel, and a few of the giddy youth of the colony decide that they shall have it; so after some weeks of mysterious plottings and private rehearsals, it is announced through the press that, on such or such a date, the "Original Christy Minstrels" — or as close an imitation of them as possible — will give a select entertainment at Wisebart Hall "for the benefit of the Miners and Mechanics' Institute." The notice is received with strong approval from all sides, the only dissenting voice being that of the village blacksmith, who is something of an austere philosopher in his way, and who volunteers the opinion that the proposed show is "not very elevating;" but he represents a hopeless minority of one, and the preparations go merrily on in spite of him.

These have to start from the very "grass-roots," and here our fertility of resource again displays itself: the hall in question is merely a "hall," and a stage has therefore to be constructed; one of the cabal (who will presently manage the bass-viol) is more or less of a carpenter, and proceeds at once to build it —

and he builds a very good one. Wings, and scenery, and curtain are needed. "Glen," who is to be the "George Christy" of the occasion, and who is an artist of merit, (although obliged to be a house-painter for bread,) quits temporarily his daily grind, and giving free range to his fancy, in a few days has the stage canvases tastefully decorated, and produces a drop curtain on to which he has transferred a small section of Main street, with some striking hints of familiar figures, and various details bristling with points, all of which are quickly recognized by the house before it fairly seats itself on the first evening. In the meantime, he fills in his leisure by carefully framing his jokes and manufacturing his own songs.

Nor do the resources of the cabal fail them here. An overture is needed, and the "first violin" produces one in two or three days. And so with properties, costumes, and what not. The middle man, "Mr. Johnson," arranges much of the dialogue, writes some of the press notices, gets out the play-bills, and runs the finances, while the office of ticket-taker at the door is allotted to an ex-collegian of high degree, who speaks several languages and is master of a profession, but who for the present is floating about the country, free from care, and ready for whatever the day may bring, provided its offering is not burdened with serious responsibilities or grinding toil.

The house is sold out long before the date, and premiums are offered in vain for seats on the eventful evening. The hall is none too large, and it is packed full. "Mr. Johnson" appears at the footlights with a little speech of introduction, then the curtain rises and discloses thirteen gentlemen with burnt-cork complexions, in conventional evening dress, with kinky hair and lace ruffles. An approving murmur ripples over the audience, and the trouble begins. "Glen" is visibly disturbed for a moment, as the first object that catches his eye is his wife, seated down in the front row, not ten feet away from him; and he whispers *sotto voce* to his neighbor, "This is comedy now — but there'll be tragedy when I get home!" for Mistress "Glen" had promised him to lose herself in the audience. But the overture is already under way, and "Glen" settles down promptly to business with his tambourine. His vis-a-vis at the other end, with the bones, is Snedeker, a temporary sojourner among us, and the two keep up a cross-fire of witticisms, largely original, like their songs, to the great delight of the audience, many of whom, curious to relate, are seeing a real old-style minstrel show for the first time, while the show itself has the novel interest of being the first of its kind yet given in the Territory.

There is a quartette of fine voices in the semi-circle, while the instrumental work is decidedly above the average; so that the genteel "first part" goes off with the finish and propriety of a drawing-room musicale. It is in the second part — the "olio" — where they have allowed themselves much license, and here the fun becomes fast and furious, much of it also original. "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines," in the person of Mr. Salisbury, charms the house with his strut and his song, and his howling swell uniform (a la Lingard); and there is a bit of opera, and various burlesque acts; but it is only when "Mlle. Marie Bonfanti" appears in her act that they really get on their feet. She is down on the play-bills as "from Her Majesty's Theatre, London," with a long and extravagant description, and curiosity is piqued as to her identity: and the latter is still by no means settled when a colored *danseuse* glides in, and whirls about in decidedly scanty pink skirts in a *pas seul* like the *premiere* of the ballet. The audience, as I say, get up on their feet, but many of them get down again quickly, and many fans are speedily put into service — for, in truth, these early Arcadians are a modest people, and they seem a bit shocked. One of our most respected clergymen nervously pulls his wife back to her seat, and then rises himself to investigate further, but he becomes so fascinated by the graceful gyrations of the black charmer that he (unconsciously, of course) continues standing until she leaves the stage, and brings upon himself much good-natured chaff from his neighbors. After the first shock, the colored damsel grows in favor with her audience — so much so that she earns a thundering encore, and returns to the stage for another "turn;" and not the least of her evening's triumph lies in the fact that she continues to be "the great unknown," in spite of her two appearances.

The whole evening is one of pure, unadulterated fun, and the minstrels sing and play themselves into such favor that they are obliged to repeat the performance, for the benefit of those whom they couldn't crowd in on the first occasion; and within a few weeks they construct a new programme, and repeat their first success, and win golden shekels for the Institute; and I am not at all sure that, before their four performances come to an end, the dissenting village blacksmith doesn't relent, and finally sneak in somehow under the canvas.

This introduction of the village blacksmith — who, by the way, is a good enough citizen, within his own rugged, narrow lines — recalls many other odd figures, whose personal eccentricities or make-up throw them into such sharp contrast with the mass of their fellow-citizens as to make them attractive subjects for a portrait gallery; such, for instance, as the master "saw-bones" of the mining population, Dr. Ochiltree (although he might not respond to that name) — a man "with a past," who learned his trade in the Crimea; a swashbuckler in gait as he swaggers down the street — a drinker of strong drinks and ugly in his cups, but at other times only noisily grotesque; or Dr. Wolfe, that urbane and dignified gentleman of the old school — "bred in old Kentucky, suh!" — who sacrifices his fine abilities to a passion for his native corn-juice; or "Dismal Jimmy," the misanthropic cobbler down by the head of the Casey road, who, in spite of the incongruity, calls to mind Kotzebue's "Stranger" more than any one else — at least as the stage conventionally presents him; or Russian Aleck, whose persistently pathetic appeals for a scrap within the ropes and under the rules recently met with such a gratifying response from an unskilled native amateur; or garrulous Garibaldi, the transplanted Red Republican, who essays to be a power in politics; or another score, in brief, familiar to you and me: but all these demand strong colors in oils, and a vigorous touch on a canvas background — requirements entirely beyond the cunning of the sketcher in plain black and white, who is entrusting to paper these rambling reminiscences and simple chronicles of the people who furnish the grouping within which these figures live, move and have their being. It is high time, also, that we make a better acquaintance with this little community as a whole, and this calls for a special chapter.

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IV

The Community as a Whole, and the Social Colony as a Part.

LET me say, then, that by the time we have now reached — which we will call the beginning of 1869, and still at least a year before the whistle of the locomotive screams among the foot-hills, our mining community counts about six thousand souls within its borders. In the early time of the rush for gold, ten thousand men — no less — were tearing up the gravel in Gregory, Russell, and a dozen other gulches, making the hills ring with the swishing and crashing of rockers and cradles, and scenting the air with the unvarying daily bacon and coffee; but that was ten years ago, and so soon as they had skimmed the cream from the surface diggings, and creek-bar, and placer, the restless (and reckless) greater half of them, following the habit of their kind, drifted off with the first stampede to more alluring fields, whose attractions were enhanced by the hazy glamour of distance.

They left behind them those who had the patience and the confidence to await the development of "ore in place," which would form the basis and supply the *raison d'etre* of the more permanent community of the future. Many even of these, indeed, may have in the beginning indulged secret hopes of making their stakes and returning to the old home in "a year or two," perhaps; but, be that as it may, they mostly became gradually fixed more or less rigidly in this or that location, and identified willy-nilly with its varying fortunes. Many, in the first immigration, had left families behind them, and these in course of time gradually joined them, even though that entailed usually the long passage by caravan from "the River," and often the risks of encountering the savage lords of the desert in hostile array. Indeed, with many the weary tramp began far to the east of the great river; — but that counted for little with these, who were themselves mostly the sons and daughters of Western pioneers of a generation or two before.

Such was largely the composition of the little community when the fame of its mines travelled across the country and attracted the money of the far East in the way before related; and there has up to this time been little fluctuation or change. Of course it had in addition, as it has now, (that is, now in this spring of 1869,) its traders, its adventurers, and its share of human driftwood, without which no mining camp ever existed since the world began; but these latter are distinctly in the minority — there are only enough of them, indeed, to add a bit of color here and there to a picture whose gray and sober tones are almost too pronounced.

Its traders, Jew and Gentile, while enterprising and aggressive, are in the main men of character and often of high respectability, and many of them, as time passes, hold prominent place in public councils, city and Territorial. Its adventurers, while in a sense true soldiers of fortune, support their roles in a very mild sort of way, and without detriment either to the public morals or the public peace; while the unclassed human driftwood — "things of shreds and patches" — are at least picturesque, often interesting studies, and in but the rarest cases become public burdens. There are among them in any class no "Broncho Bills," or "Three-Fingered Petes," or "Black Jacks," with Colt's "navys" strapped to their waists, and marked with jagged records of dead men they have left behind them in other camps. Few if any of them are of the stuff of which heroes are made by the delineators of wild life in the West. Central indeed is now, and always has been, sadly lacking in many of the romantic features of the mining camp that one reads of in the dialect story bound in yellow that is commonly accepted as authority. There is no "Poverty Gulch," or "Deadman's Claim," or "Roaring Camp," within many miles of it, and there never was, even in its earliest days. It has always been, as a rule, severely prosaic in its nomenclature — the "Bobtail" being its nearest approach to euphonious barbarism, and even that may legitimately claim a strictly logical origin.

The greater part of its population is native American. There is a fair sprinkling of quiet and thrifty Germans, several hundred Celts, and some few Scandinavians. In the last two or three years there has been a steady influx of robust, stout-chested, pink-cheeked lads from the tin mines of Cornwall, and these promise in time to outnumber all but the native element. These various groups by this time have become compacted into a steady-going, industrious community, easily controlled, and generally quiet and law-abiding. There is very little brawling. For a time, indeed, after the Cornish lads first appeared, they fell into an occasional "mix-up" with their hereditary enemies, the Celts of Nevada; but they have amalgamated fairly on better acquaintance, and are now satisfied with occasionally pitting their champions against each other, in friendly combats conducted strictly according to the rules laid down by the Most Noble the Marquis of Queensbury, and it is seldom that any lasting bad blood results.

Indeed, as must have before now appeared in this little story, Central is absurdly decorous for a mining camp. It is true, the town has its calaboose, which often sports a large guest-roll of a Saturday night — but the guests are only transients, who pay for their lodgings and depart shamefacedly next morning, and whose lapses from grace injure none half so much as themselves; while as for the jail, the presumptive stronghold for criminals in another quarter of the town, the bars on its windows are of higher utility as an advertisement of the sheriff's hotel than as a means of detaining unwilling lodgers. It has indeed a record of a certain prisoner, who after a time found his solitary state so irksome that he slipped out between two days, and, being a bit of a wag, chalked on the wall a chaffing message for his keeper, in derision both of the bars and of the futility of tempting him back, thus:

"Perhaps I'm on the land, perhaps I'm on the
sea;
Perhaps I've gone to Brigham Young, a Mormon
for to be."

But there are other ways in which Central is quite as unique as in its perennial quiet. While it boasts of no bonanza kings, neither is it burdened with any paupers. Men (and women) who have the spirit and the enterprise to radically sever old ties and strike out for better fortune a thousand — two thousand — miles away, cut off for long intervals, in an isolated mountain district, from the security and comforts of civilization, may be safely depended upon never to become public charges; besides, the uplifting air of the rugged hills is not favorable to the growth of such excrescences upon the body politic. Surely there is nothing fantastic or strained in crediting the close environment of the mountains with a positive, moving influence upon human action. Sneer at the sentiment if you will, my matter-of-fact friend, but a greater than I hath long ago proclaimed it: a prophet for a long time without honor in his own country, mocked at for years as a half-crazy dreamer by men of infinitely smaller soul, but none the less a virile, soldierly figure, whose strong personality filled a prominent place among both the explorers and the pioneers of the great new West. The "little kingdom" did itself honor by taking his name. Although he passed over the Great Divide some years before the time of this writing, he still lived long enough to see not only the fulfillment of his oft-derided prophecies, but their realization in such tremendous measure as must have amazed even himself, the most daring of all in his speculations upon a future great commonwealth of mountain and plain. A dreamer, forsooth! And yet this forceful, rugged explorer, and true prophet of material things, was ever keenly susceptible to the intangible influence of his surroundings, and disdained not to acknowledge it. Referring to the Western volunteers of 1846 who went to Mexico, he said: "Our boys crossed the Mountains, and came home orators." Make me a finer, subtler, nobler epigram, thou scoffer!

In this little civic society, so largely made up of the "working classes," so called, may be seen the anomaly of a mining population, moving quietly along on the even tenor of its way, conscious of no grievances, and on amicable terms with its employers. It should furnish a curious study to some latter-day theorists. The miner lives always comfortably, and often in his own cottage, and sends his children to the big stone school-house on the hill-side. He is a man of sturdy independence, and if he tires of his job, he drops it, but he also concedes the right of his employer to take on a man in his vacated place, and the right of that other man to fill it. Such a thing as a strike or a boycott is entirely outside of his experience, for nowhere is the principle of "live and let live" better observed. The "walking delegate," should he ever muster sufficient enterprise to penetrate here, would be forced to hunt another trail forthwith, and lengthen his peregrinations, or accept the novel and disagreeable alternative of settling down and going to work; for he would find the conditions decidedly unfavorable to the success of his peculiar calling.

Master and man have always maintained the friendliest relations — they are, indeed, one may say, practically on terms of equality; the "man" of to-day may himself be a "master" to-morrow. The "prospects" in these surrounding hills are as closely drilled almost as the holes in the top of a pepper-box. They represent the fitful work of hundreds of men in the easily mined surface quartz, which may or may not be rich, but in which the chances of a valuable "find" are so great compared to the small amount at risk — the investment being chiefly one's labor — as to tempt every one, sooner or later, to try his fortune.

Since the gradual collapse, one by one, already noted, of many of the Eastern companies a few years back, outside capital has been not only shy, but decidedly chilly toward these Gilpin mines; and it has become quite evident that the latter must prove their value before any material amount of it is tempted back. Besides, many promising properties have been abandoned in the dissolution or foreclosure of these unfortunate companies after large expenditures had been made upon them in the way of development. Many, indeed, have reverted to the original proprietors. It is a peculiar condition of affairs, without parallel anywhere in the Territory, but it is one which is destined to bring about the ultimate redemption of the district. It stimulates individual effort, by the prospect of an unusual reward, in a remarkable degree. Many pools are formed to lease and work these properties, made up mostly by subscriptions from men who are themselves working by the day in the larger mines; while many others, having worked a long enough spell to put by a "grub-stake" sufficient for a limited time, go independently on this or that location, and pick away until enough is got together for a mill run — and this in many cases has already proved the first step toward moderate fortune. Scarcely a week passes in which some one of these home enterprises does not take a more or less prominent place as a producer.

—— Socially, there are no rigidly drawn artificial lines, and yet the distinctions between one group and another are as clearly established as in any long-settled Eastern community. I have said there are no bonanza kings. Indeed, there is little surplus of wealth in any hands. The camp's progress thus far has been marked by one long-continued struggle against adverse conditions, and there has been no phenomenal yield from the ground itself in any single instance to place any one man or group of men financially above their fellows in any unusual degree; and even had such been the case, it alone would have been productive of no especial social advantage. Our little coterie has taken form only by the grouping together of those who would blend naturally through similarity of education and tastes, and prior social standing elsewhere; and, on the other hand, to its honor be it said, no paucity in amount of material possessions has — at least as yet — been made any bar to admission. It is still comparatively small in numbers, and because of that its setting apart from the great mass of the community has been all the more accentuated; and yet its place apart is tacitly conceded, and maintained without friction or jealousy.

No such feeling has been generated as of "class against class" because of its assumption or maintenance of a circle of its own. On the contrary, as regards the community at large, rarely indeed does one ever see so friendly a footing maintained as there is here throughout its entire membership. Every one knows and recognizes every one else, and whatever may be the intangible but positive differences of social position, all acknowledge a common bond of fellowship; while, as a subject of the "little kingdom," the humblest member manifests a certain pride of place, and regards himself to that extent as on terms of equality with him or them who may hold the foremost rank of citizenship. I can offer no better illustration of this than by introducing here a section of the community which should properly have been noticed earlier — as loyal a part of the clan, and, as a class, as thoroughly worthy of the place they fill as any other in it, native or alien. They have been with us, some of them, from the earlier days, after Aunt Clara, who came in with the pioneers, had prepared the way.

She needs no introduction to you of the clan, does good old Aunt Clara Brown. True, her skin is black, her figure lanky, angular and loose at the joints, and her garments — such as they are — hang from her shoulders with even less of grace than the empty ones that swing to and fro on the clothes-line that she fills daily in her never-ending toil. But a few years back she was held as a human chattel, and occupied a place so low in the social scale that anything more humble would be inconceivable; and physically perhaps you would find few human figures less attractive, unless it may be at times when her motherly soul shines through her eyes and her face lights up with the expression of the self-abnegating spirit within her. Yet, humble though her sphere, nobly has she filled it, and any record of the earlier years of the community would be unworthily written which would seek to ignore her. She was raised in old Kentucky, and, with her own freedom secured after years of persistent, patient toil, when well along in life she joined the procession of gold-seekers to Gregory gulch, where, through the unusual returns of a mining camp for labor such as hers, she has been enabled in the first few years to bring out from the old plantation her children, and latterly her children's children; and with them, whether aided through her efforts or stimulated by her example, have year by year come many others of her race, worthily represented by the Poynters, the Lees, the Nelsons, and other families who are as tenacious of recognition as subjects of the "little kingdom" as you or I may be.

There is, I repeat, something peculiar in the strength and in the lasting nature of the ties that bind this isolated community together; and to whatever these may be attributed, it is in them that may be found the secret of that "clannishness" that in later days is so often commented upon by and at the same time is so inexplicable to the "outside barbarians."

—— If you have followed me thus far — you who are not of the clan — you have no doubt already voted these mountain people entirely too dull and commonplace, too prosaic and staidly respectable, to have made a history worth recording even in so light and fragmentary a style as this; and it may be that you are quite ready to drop the story at this point, in default of any prospect of more thrillingly interesting chronicles than those which have already passed in review; yet, while I shall regret the loss of your company *en route*, I can only urge as against your criticism, that an honest tale speeds best when plainly told, and I must not swerve from the record "as my remembrance hath it." Otherwise I might be tempted to make the picture more attractive, in a way, by filling it in with the riot and license, the glitter and jingle of a "wide open" mining camp; or harrow up your soul with a detailed account of "a man for breakfast," as he is usually served up in such communities; or enliven the story by introducing the "Wild Terror from Bitter Creek," riding into town on a daylight "jag," and shooting holes in the shop-windows of Main street; but, alas! all happenings of this class are entirely foreign to our experience. We have indeed grown so used to our placid routine that it is not even considered necessary, either for the "recreation" of the workingman, or on any other specious high moral ground, that the quiet of a Sunday evening (which has always obtained by an unwritten law in this eccentric community) shall be disturbed by opening the theatre for the boisterous horse-play of any company of tie-walking barn-stormers that may happen to travel this way, as seems to be the fashion of a later generation.

Still, I shall have told my story thus far to small purpose if you have gathered from it that we have no relish for all the fun that may come our way, or in default of that, for all we can manufacture among ourselves, and often out of the most unpromising materials. Don't for a moment fall into the ludicrous error of thinking us so pedantic or priggish, in our lofty assumption of superiority in social, literary and scientific lines, that we can't unbend at will, and even occasionally indulge in a whoop! It may soften your cynical resentment if I (very privately) whisper in your ear that we have this very day a "Shoo Fly" running full blast at one end of the town, and a highly prosperous home brewery at the other, (and one which, by the way, turns out excellent beer;) and that we even suspect that there is more than one green-cloth "lay-out" in private nooks in the town, although we may have no "official" knowledge of the fact!

But for all that, we don't shoot if the cards fail to go our way, nor do we jump other fellows' claims, nor carve them for jumping ours. No one seems in such a hurry for leaving our good company as to wish to die with his boots on. Our sense of decency would revolt at such a fashion of departure; besides, our cemetery space is limited, and its location not merely uninviting, but absolutely dreary.

—— To return to our little social system, from which I have been tempted into too long a digression. If you would see it in its best and most comprehensive grouping, you must attend a "club party;" for, of its many functions, some novel, some conventional, as may be, the "club dance" certainly takes precedence. True, there is no "club," but that is of small consequence. The title has come into use, no one knows how, but it is accepted and approved; and if it means anything, it comprehends the entire social set. Whoever moves within that circle is not only entitled but expected to come and dance when a dance is "on," and all are treated with the informality that implies eligibility on the one hand, and presumes financial support on the other whenever demanded.

The club dances, in their beginnings, are never in pursuance of any regular programme: they simply "occur," at intervals more or less irregular. The chiefs of our two banking-houses, who rejoice in the same baptismal name, are usually the prime movers, as they are perhaps the most hearty lovers and certainly for a time have been the acknowledged leaders, of this particular function. Without previous intimation — and doubtless because of a sudden inspiration — "Joe" from up the street invades the lair of his business rival down at the corner, and announces with as little prelude as possible that it's been a long time since the last dance, and that in his opinion the social health of the town requires that we have another forthwith: a suggestion that meets with as prompt and hearty a response from the other "Joe" as did that traditional one of the Governor of North Carolina from his neighbor of South Carolina, with respect to another form of physical relaxation.

Once decided upon, delays are not thought of, and would not be tolerated. The details of preparation are equitably divided: one undertakes to secure the hall and engage Patz and his fiddlers, while the other starts out to capture the necessary funds from individual assessment, and to notify the privileged ones of the fact and of the date, which is never fixed for more than thirty-six hours ahead. There is no necessity for elaborate or formal invitations on embossed paper. We scorn to waste time upon such frivolous items, and we can't afford them if we would. The word is simply passed along, and within an hour or two every eligible maiden of the social colony is overhauling her wardrobe with a view to any necessary renovation; for as soon as the rumor of the event is in one way or another wafted to her on the mountain air, she is happy in the assurance that on the following night she will be "tripping the light fantastic." There are no "maidens all forlorn" in this community, whose lot it is to sit sulky and neglected at home. Men are altogether in excess numerically, and every girl beforehand is certain of her invitation, her only matter for doubt being the choice of escorts that may fall to her, and this depends largely upon the relative speed or enterprise of the various youthful beaux in getting up the hill, or into this or that part of the two little towns where she may happen to dwell.

There is of course much keen, though friendly, rivalry, and while none of the laws of courtesy are infringed upon, there is little standing upon ceremony in the quest for "partners." Even the sacred inner precincts of the public school-houses are invaded during study hours, and the teacher's rostrum for the time being shared by the young man while he solicits the consent of the fair pedagogue to take her in charge for the coming rout; and if, as is usually the case, she be a young woman with a natural bent for humor, she manages to cover up the proceeding or veil it from the youthful idea before her, and at the same time to indulge herself in a bit of malicious pleasantry, by introducing her young man as a properly accredited "visitor," and challenging him to address her class — a proposal in the face of which the youth sometimes retires in confusion, sometimes not, but certainly never without carrying her promise away with him.

The place of assembly has been from earliest days principally the dining-room of the Connor House, with an occasional diversion to the court-room over the sheriff's hotel on Eureka street. The first is still the town's chief hostelry, named in honor of the valiant General Pat. Connor, who a few years ago became famous by his many successes in making good Indians out of bad ones; but his method caused such a shrinkage in their numbers that the Government, alarmed for its wards, called him off the field, and retired him to Utah, on some petty mission to the Mormons. His memory is still kept green in the hearts of the colonists, but the same can hardly be said of the little tavern, which has by now decidedly lost its pristine freshness. Happily for us, however, our German friends have lately put up a spacious hall for their Turnverein, and this has now become our regular meeting-place whenever the spirit moves the leaders of the dance to call us together as above related.

This gathering of the clan upon such an occasion forms about the fairest and most charming picture that the little colony can present. In its picturesque grouping or in its bits of detail here and there can be seen at a glance the characteristic features of the social commune as a whole, as plainly and comprehensively as though the record of its life and action were read from the printed page. Youth and beauty are there, of course — that goes without saying. Staid and substantial middle-age is also there, in the person of pater- and mater-familias, who have brought their pretty daughter; but let it not be supposed for a moment that they are not there equally also on their own account. Papa will convince you of the fact, as he begins to expand with the music, should your manner give him the faintest shadow of a suspicion that you consider his importance or his utility limited to the mere chaperoning of his charming girl. At some interval in the programme you will find him suddenly in the middle of the floor, energetically stepping off the figures of some rustic reel — some memory of a "husking bee" in old Kentucky, or an "apple-paring" in far-away New England; and he is becomingly dressed for the part. There is a tell-tale sheen to the back of his frock coat, or something not easily definable in the cut of his vest, or in the pattern and style of his neckcloth, which fits in charmingly with the old-fashioned emphasis of the steps he is figuring on the floor. The applause that follows him is spontaneous and hearty, and the widespread laugh denotes that the general effect has been amusing in the extreme; quite so: but, after all, may it not be hinted, without irony, that from another point of view there appears something almost pathetic in it as a reminiscence of other days — an idea helped out by the little crepe shawl or the lace mantle that adorns the shoulders of mamma, and that carries with it the indefinable odor suggestive of a careful folding and putting away in the cedar closet at intervals for a series of years?

But this is an occasion for light-hearted enjoyment of the present, rather than for the ever-so-mild melancholy of the reminiscent mood, and all the elements are here for its production — youth, and fair faces, and graceful figures, and music and the mazy dance — so let's be gay. The picturesqueness of the grouping is enhanced by the variety, in style as well as material, that marks the dress of the whole assembly. Bachelors, young and old, move about with equal sprightliness in many forms — and many colors — of more or less jaunty attire. The monotonous uniformity of black "swallow-tails" and expansive white linen fronts framed in low-cut vests is pointedly absent from the group as a whole, while one or two youths are conspicuous in posing as exceptions; but if rumor be correct, they must extract as much bliss as possible to-night from the possession of their claw-hammers, as it is not at all improbable that the next public occasion will see something curiously like these dress-coats in style covering the shoulders of other fellows of much the same figure. (Now that I have written this, I am not at all sure that it should be allowed to go into print, for there are certain exigencies born of the colony's isolated position, the secrets of which should be as carefully guarded as those of "my lady's toilet.")

There are many typical figures in this assembly — for, as I have said, we lack not for men, and many of the older of these have spanned the round world, in various interests, scientific and otherwise — and I would be strongly tempted to introduce them, did I not fear that some unconscious slip of my pen might mar the picture. Still I can point out a few familiar figures without undue trepidation. There is our "Beau Nash," of course — for without him the function could scarcely go on — assuming charge of the floor, as is his natural, fully conceded right. Genial, sympathetic, pleasure-loving, full of tact and experienced in the needs of such occasions as these, we should be crippled indeed without our master of ceremonies, who, possessing much of the talents and happily lacking the faults of the ancient "monarch of Bath," governs admirably this miniature pleasure realm, and wears his title worthily.

There is Carroll — one of the Carrolls of Carrollton, you know — a pioneer among the colony's physicians, and everybody's friend: so devoted to the dance that, in spite of having sprained his ankle recently, you may see him over there limping through a quadrille, with his foot in bandages and a crutch under his arm. He will leave us by-and-bye, to make a home in the great prairie-city after a decade in the mountains, and will carry away with him one of our fairest from the lower town — a double loss that society can ill afford.

Still Esculapius is well represented in the colony, and we shall not suffer for want of medical attendance. There on the floor is McArthur, of Philadelphia, whose harmless little foibles we are accustomed to smile at, while we admire in him the sterling qualities of the cultured gentleman. Close beside him is his familiar friend, the fair-haired John, without whose aid (administered "*secundum artem*," as he is himself wont to say) even his professional skill might avail little. Notice that tall, slender young fellow near him, who came only last year from Iowa: the diffident, retiring man of books — scholar and practitioner — whose novel fortune it will be to demonstrate the virtues of daily hemorrhages, combined with hard night saddle-riding among the mountains in handling an extensive practice, as conducive to avoirdupois and longevity.

Among that lively group of young fellows who are just scattering to engage partners for the next dance is our young Baron, only a year or two out of Freiburg, in his native Saxony — accepted critic of music and the arts; and close by, and moving with not quite so sprightly a step, (for he is near-sighted, you know,) is the dear old "Professor" — no, not old, although of mature years as years are counted, for he holds the secret of perennial youth: hath he not "been five thousand years a boy?" Of high scientific attainments, and a wide experience acquired by travel over the best part of the world, few there be who have so steadily walked into our affections, and who hold so secure a place there. True, his hair is scant, and his spectacles always in evidence, but these are externals of small consequence. His youthful heart, as well as his infallible taste, is indicated this very minute, as we note his choice of one of the youngest and brightest young "buds" as his partner for the dance now forming. Mr. Hill, who fixed his own charming household here a year or two ago, and who is present now on the floor — an enthusiastic supporter of the club party always — laid us under added obligation socially when he introduced the dear old boy into the colony, on locating his smelter in the lower town.

Well, the two bankers are here, of course, and the law is well represented, and the leaders of the mining interests, and there is the usual gathering of all the young fellows — but I shall refrain from further particularizing, as it might land me on delicate ground; and, considering that I have jogged along fairly well so far on the impersonal road, I may best continue so to the end.

And the ladies — God bless them! what better can I say than that they are young American gentlewomen, fated for the time to live so far away from "anywhere" that they miss many of the good things that enter as a matter of course into the lives of their Eastern sisters; compelled in many ways to practise self-denial because of the novel situation into which they have been brought through family necessity, or what not; yet not only brave and merry-hearted withal, and too supremely proud and self-respecting to waste time and energies in useless repinings, but quick both to adapt themselves to their rough surroundings, and to extract from them all the cheer and comfort and pleasure possible.

They are simply clad, and in dresses that have already served on more than one occasion, but which, through deft feminine manipulation, are made to conform somewhat, by a touch here and there, to such changes in the modes as reach them now and then, in some way incomprehensible to the masculine mind, from the far Eastern home, or from hints gathered at a glance from the fresher gowns of some new arrival. It is the "chignon" period, as fashion epochs go, and you will no doubt notice a general uniformity in the style of dressing the hair. It is also the short-lived period of that distortion of dress and carriage known as the "Grecian bend;" but let me record it to their credit that, however their feminine hearts may yearn occasionally for the means of a closer conformity to the prevailing modes, their good sense and independence sturdily revolt at imitating in the lightest measure such an idiotic perversion of the womanly graces.

Well, they are all here, you may be sure, at the club dance — married women and maidens — fresh, fair and natural, dressed with taste at least, even if there is no suggestion of extensive wardrobes, and ready to enjoy the occasion to the utmost, as they do all good things that come their way. The pity is that there are still so few of them, for although there are men in plenty ranged around the walls, we can't yet form couples enough to employ all the floor space at our disposal in this ample hall. But we shall grow during yet several more of the coming years, and there are numbers of fair women still on the far side of the great Plains whose destinies are to be linked with the colony, and whose presence will not only add freshness and bloom to the club party, but will carry comfort and cheer into many a home in the little mountain commune.

V.

A Railway, a Hotel and a Riddle.

Now come three or four eventful years. The first of them sees the long-desired connection made with the East by the entrance into Denver of one great through railway, and the link supplied that joins the little prairie town to the outside world through another. During the year the mountain colony receives a material addition to its numbers; in fact, it may be said that it at last becomes rounded into permanent form with the completion of the iron road.

With the colony, as with the Territory, the first epoch of its history is ended. The chapter of the "pioneer period" is closed, with its hardships, its dangers, and its isolation; and an era opens promising a far greater measure of the comforts and luxuries of life, and requiring a much smaller exercise of self-denial, than the one just now ended; but while it is welcomed with delight, it is possible it is not untinged with a shade of regret for the old life, which had its charms in spite of its rough edges, and was invested with much that was attractive and fascinating, perhaps indeed because of its peculiar conditions.

——Just here, in passing, let me occupy the briefest space in which to give further point to the assertion I made at the beginning, of the characteristic propensity of the "little kingdom" to reach out and exert some influence, great or little, but still an influence — or at least to claim some share, however small, in the passing events of the world. Five thousand miles away, across the sea, in this summer of 1870, Gaul and Teuton are clutching each other's throats in deadly struggle. In the remote hamlet on the mountain-top, unsolicited, but inspired by loyal concern for country and kindred, a handful of German women hold a bazaar, solicit aid, and by one means or another, but quietly and without ostentation, get together a few hundred dollars, and remit it as their modest and unsought subscription toward the maintenance of the German war hospitals. The amount is paltry, perhaps, but both motive and action are moulded on noble lines, and deserve to be recorded, even though they may not result in restoring one wounded soldier to the service of the Fatherland.

——We act much like children on the advent of the railroad. Excursions to Denver, which hitherto, aside from occasions of business or other necessity, have rarely offered conditions sufficiently alluring to draw us out of our mountain fastness, have suddenly become extremely popular; for now they present one feature worth the fatigue of the all-day coach journey, and that is the sight of the railway train, and of the one end of the iron in place that actually continues without a gap or break of so much as a rail's length all the way to the great river, and then on and on and on, even to the very door of the old home, two thousand miles away. Surely never before has a rusty bit of cold iron had the power to inspire so strong a measure of sentiment. What matter if its first few hundred miles carries it through a region of cactus, and sage-brush, and prairie dogs; or if the stations are cheerless "dug-outs," raised but a few feet above the plain, and suggestive of nothing so much as of cyclones and savages; or that the wayside eating-houses are but worn-out old "day coaches," side-tracked; or that for this western half of the unfenced, unhoused, treeless and desolate Plains country, the winter storm still has a pitiless sweep that may stop the train in its course if it will?

In spite of all this, there is a singular amount of comfort in the thought that it's now "all rail" to the old Eastern home; and as for the storm, one must take his chances of that. To say the truth, some of the clan, in their eagerness to test the novelty of a ride on the rail across the Plains, do take the chances this first winter, and get a surfeit of the novelty sufficient to hold their roving propensities in check for a long while thereafter; for they fall foul of a blizzard down by Fort Wallace, which holds them tight in its grip for a fortnight, shunted in between walls of snow ten feet high — in sight of the flag at the fort, two miles away, "so near and yet so far" — and unable to make a foot of progress until the slowly returning sun gradually clears the track ahead of them. Happily the family lunch-basket is an important feature of one's travelling outfit in these first days of the railroad; and happily also, in this instance, the express car, by a curious chance, (for it is eastbound,) happens to carry many edible canned goods, so that the storm-harried travellers do not starve. By pooling their mental resources, also, and drawing on their acquirements, they contrive, with game, and song, and story, and what not, to make the weary days go by in one fashion or another; and when finally released they even take great comfort in the fact of having added to their stock of frontier experiences one so remarkable, and so well worthy to be told years afterward to one's children.

—— "A Tale of Two Cities" — not the dramatic *chef d'œuvre* of the great "Boz," who laid down his pen forever last year, but a small sketch-book to which "Boz" contributes only the title, and that unconsciously — appears on the scene without preliminary advertisement by author or publisher. 'Tis but a modest *feuilleton* — an unpretending leaflet of the size of a lady's note-sheet, which, through the quiet agency of the Post Office, insinuates itself gently to a place on every supper-table in the social colony on a certain evening, and, with no sponsor for its unannounced *entree* into an exclusive and critical circle, introduces itself simultaneously to ten-score pair of curious eyes. It is greeted by many various forms of emotion — laughing, critical, acrimonious, even profane — and all of an intensity that its modest appearance hardly seems to justify; for the innocent looking little sheet merely publishes a list of the bachelors in the two towns, whom it divides into three groups as to matrimonial eligibility, and as to each of whom it indulges in a few remarks. These are intended to portray their special characteristics, and to this end the author, as though conscious of the poverty of his own vocabulary, invokes the aid of Shakespeare, and causes him to contribute a single line in each case, apparently chosen with the especial object of rendering the description as clear and vivid as possible. Such at least is its effect; and as each little sketch, also, is reduced within the smallest compass by the pruning of every superfluous word, it may be that the abridged sentences present a keener edge as a result of the process.

Whoever is responsible for this little portrait gallery seems to have meant his work generally as a harmless squib, to be laughed over for an hour and then thrown aside and forgotten; but while he is in the main successful, there seem to be readers here and there who are not of the same mind — who in fact affect to believe that he has made a too faithful or perhaps a malicious exhibit of some of their known idiosyncrasies; and among these there is much talk of offended dignity calling for personal chastisement of the author — or indeed "early coffee and pistols" out on Bates Hill — when the wretched joker shall be found and exposed. Suspicion centres naturally on the recognized wags of the colony, and they one by one have an exceedingly busy week in disavowing it as their handiwork; although it must be said that they do this with some reluctance, as on the whole the little skit grows in popularity, and more or less fame promises to greet the author if he will only disclose himself. Half-a-score at least are charged with the individual perpetration of the *jeu d'esprit*, and each basks in the sunshine of a brief renown until one by one they are dropped as "not proven."

It is fully a month before the little lampoon ceases to largely monopolize the general discussion in social circles, and indeed it has not been unproductive of results which might justify its creation: it has furnished much laughing matter for the passing hour, for after all it arouses more amused curiosity than lasting bitterness. According to the local journal, "it is universally conceded to be a very witty production, while generally regretted that it should contain anything exceptional. No less than twenty men have been charged with the authorship, but all deny it save one, who thought it a favorable opportunity to secure a literary reputation, but whose forwardness to claim its paternity ruined his hopes!" It is even temporarily utilized for advertising purposes — the alert and facetious master of "The Pharmacy" offering "a reward of $1,000 for the body of the author, dead or alive, and no questions asked;" and the town's booksellers seize the occasion to stimulate the sale of the original Dickens romance, some volumes of which have been long slumbering on their shelves. It indeed inspires a local poet to practise his by no means dull wit upon

"Ye wretch who wrote
Ye tale of ye Two Cities;"

But his verses are unfortunately lost to posterity because of the ephemeral character of the journal to whose columns he entrusted them; and while they evoke much admiring and sympathetic comment, they fail in their purpose, if such it be, to prod the criminal into declaring himself: for he seems to prefer for his work the more lasting — perhaps because ambiguous — fame of other celebrated but still unsolved riddles of history, such as the identity of "The Man in the Iron Mask," or of "Who struck Billy Patterson?"

About the only impress it finally leaves behind it is the aggravation of the unanswered query, "Who did it?" which is taken up at intervals in the social circle for a long time after, but without ever reaching any satisfactory result; while the interest directly excited by its publication is forced in a few weeks to give way to the social flutter occasioned by the more impressive event of the arrival in Denver of the Russian Grand Duke Alexis, which draws a bevy of the lady colonists to the metropolis, to seize the exceptional opportunity of treading the mazy dance with the fascinating brother of the "Great White Czar."

—— The completion of the railroad naturally suggests to us an invasion by-and-bye of travellers, some on business, some on pleasure bent. Our mountain retreat, we feel, is now no longer on — or indeed beyond — the frontier, as in the past. We shall no doubt be overrun with tourists of all sorts and conditions — commercial drummers, pleasure-seekers, scientific bug-hunters, and possibly a capitalist now and then, with an eye to investment in gold mines, of which there are still a few to be had, left over from the great speculation of '63–'65. These latter people especially must be hospitably treated if we would have them regard either ourselves or our offerings with favor. But how to take care of them for even a brief sojourn is a serious question, and after a survey of the situation, the answer is not reassuring. We badly need a hotel. Our main hostelry is the Connor House, and it cannot be said to be inviting in either its inner or outer aspects. It served its purpose well enough during the log-cabin days — the primitive period of the camp — and since then, after a fashion, it has managed to take care of the limited travel brought in by the stage-coach. It bears an honored name, and is besides something of a landmark: it even has its traditions and its old associations, all more or less interesting — but if in a sentimental sense "ancient," it is also undeniably somewhat mouldy, while it possesses other features by no means attractive, aside from the utter inadequacy of the size and extent of its accommodations; briefly, it has outlived its usefulness. There are others: Central has its St. Nicholas, and Black Hawk its St. Charles, besides several not yet canonized — but none are of a class to impress

Eastern visitors with a sense of luxury or comfort any more than of the fitness of their pretentious names.

It is very evident, therefore, that a hotel we must have; and that conclusion is no sooner reached than the little community gathers itself together to take action, for it has never been slow to face emergencies, and public spirit is by no means lukewarm. A prominent citizen steps to the front to undertake the execution as soon as the plan takes form; the people promptly back him up with a subsidy, to the extent of their financial capacity; and, as a part of his reward, when the structure is completed it takes his name. It is a great event for the little town when the site is located, the old shacks cleared from the surface, and good old Father Root begins his excavations along the gulch, the waters of which he utilizes in tearing down the banks. Once entered upon, the work is pushed night and day in the fine weather of the late summer, and every evening sees a long line of interested people strung along the gulch;

watching the progress of the work, made picturesque by their own groupings and those of the workmen, under the flaring light of the torches. Then stone by stone and brick by brick for many weeks we follow its upward course, until before winter fairly sets in the roof is on the building. Another summer, however, has begun before the interior receives its finishing touches, and we can announce to the outside world that we can house and feed them as well as take them in as business partners, if so disposed.

From an æsthetic point of view, one may venture to say, (with deference to the architect, who I believe is still within shooting distance at the time of this writing,) that the hotel is not a masterpiece of construction. Judged by its exterior, it might easily be taken for a New England factory; or, cut off a story or two, and it would pass fairly well for a cavalry barracks. There has been no excess of money available, and it is evident that none has been wasted in its outside decoration; its arched entrance-way, for instance, being about as imposing as that of a railroad freight-house. But all this counts for nothing in our deep satisfaction at possessing at last a building adapted to our needs. In size it's by long odds the most pretentious structure yet erected in the town. Its interior divisions show that it's meant for utility, and its furnishing promises a reasonable amount of comfort; while its general arrangement indicates not only that it's expected to house a goodly number of people, but it's likely to become also the town's public gathering place in many ways; and in this pleasant general prospect we take a huge deal of comfort, which we indicate when we singly and in groups, and with a no doubt comical assumption of proprietorship, make a minute survey of the premises about the time that "mine host" is at last installed, throws open his register, and announces the house to be ready for business.

He is naturally averse to losing any time when once he arrives and gets the house in order; but if he imagines for a moment that such an event is to be allowed to go unmarked by a measure of ceremony befitting its importance in the minds of the people, it is only because he comes as a stranger in our midst, and knows not the colony and its customs. For days and weeks before the doors are thrown open, it has been decreed that there shall be an "opening ball," and one of such character and appointments as shall make it a star event in the town's social history. Happily the new landlord is a man of the kind who "know the time o' day," and needs not to be coerced when he learns what is afoot, but falls in with the liveliest spirit to help make it the brilliant occasion it proves to be; for many months and even years go by before the "Teller House ball" ceases to be quoted with pride as marking the conspicuous standard of the colony's social functions.

The house begins auspiciously what is destined indeed to finally prove a checkered career; but for its first half-dozen years or more it is closely associated with the brightest side of the colony's life as its central place of assembly. It becomes at once the home of the "club party," the "musicale," the "afternoon tea," and the dressy evening "reception." Many of the good people of the social set, without roofs of their own, make it their permanent abiding place; while it has the fortune for years to carry on its transient guest-roll many names prominently known from ocean to ocean, whose owners have strayed long distances from home to study the beauties of the "American Switzerland;" and among these, within its first twelve-month indeed, appears that of the recent illustrious commander of the nation's armies, and its present civic ruler, who, with his family and a brilliant military and civil *entourage*, in his progress across the continent diverges from his main route to visit the historic mining camp, and to be welcomed by the assembled people with a greeting that makes the mountains ring. There are no roses available with which to strew the path of the great captain as he alights at the hotel for dinner; but Central, with its fine scorn of hackneyed methods, rejoices now in its opportunity to treat its distinguished guests to the unique experience of treading a sidewalk paved with weighty bricks of solid native silver from the street curb to the very threshold of the hostelry.

——And during all this time of hotel building, and opening, and celebrating, the railroad has been slowly and quietly creeping up the valley of Clear Creek; and in a few months after the grand inauguration ball it reaches Black Hawk, and stops there to take a long rest. It is within a mile of us—certainly no great matter when considered as a mere measure of distance, but a most uncomfortable span when covered, as it will needs be for a long time to come, by the uncomely local hack, which we are even disposed to regard with some resentment as a pitifully contemptible little ally of the railroad in its supersedure of the royal stage-coach. True, there is a superb inconsistency in all this: we have been awaiting for years with longing expectancy the advent of the iron rails which were to annihilate time and distance between us and the Eastern home; yet no sooner do they appear, winding up the canyon in parallel lines alongside the turbid waters of the creek, than we begin to vent our regrets, some of us, at least, at the abrupt and final disappearance of the familiar coach.

None will deny the fatigue, and the dirt, and the many discomforting features of the old way, with its aggravating accompaniments of lost time, and missed connections, and delayed mails, and what not; but with all these, it had also its extremely attractive side: there was something gloriously exhilarating in rolling along at a gallant pace over the elastic turf of the Plains behind a half-dozen lively animals — now horses, now mules — and the seven days from River to Mountains were often crowded with incidents so varied as to make interesting every hour of the way; and, were anything lacking in wayside happenings, the association with the natural succession of drivers for the dozen distinct stages of the journey could usually be counted on to save it from sinking into monotony.

The overland coach driver was a purely Western product, and a unique and distinctive personality. At times it is true enough he was far from being an embodiment of all the virtues; and in some instances, indeed, he was a tough citizen, who found in his occupation on the road a convenient method of keeping sheriffs at a distance. But such cases by no means represented the class familiar to us on our section of the overland trail during the last ten years. The driver of our recollection was generally a more or less attractive character, and he forms an inseparable part of the pleasant memories attaching to the old coaching days. He was usually a curious composite of roughness and good nature, of shrewdness and simplicity — loquacious, or at times taciturn, as might be — but rarely lacking in one thing, and that was courage of a high order. Many were the occasions a few years back, when the Indian was rampant, in raid after raid, for months together, that gave the driver a chance to prove his calibre; and more than a few of the many unmarked or forgotten graves of the Plains cover the bones of heroes who got their death-wounds on the coach-box with reins in hand, and made as full and noble a sacrifice to duty as does the engineer who goes down to death with his hand on the throttle.

We of the Mountains claimed an especial proprietary right in two that I have named before somewhere — Jake Hawk and "Old Tennessee" — each a character in his way, yet entirely dissimilar in outward make-up. Jake was an undersized figure of light weight, with a shrewd-looking face seamed with the sun and storm of many seasons, and with only the merest suggestion in his slender build of the muscle that made possible the careless ease with which he guided his six-in-hand through the narrow canyons and over the rocky hills that lie between us and the valley metropolis. His whilom partner, "Old Tennessee," long, lank, and somewhat elderly, with a grave and reserved manner, and dressed in a rusty frock coat, while fully as great a master of his craft, needed but a bit of white cloth around his throat to pass for a respectable country parson, or a Western "circuit-rider" of the olden time.

Of far different mould was Bill Updike, who later appeared on the mountain route: none would ever class Bill with the genus parson, unless indeed it might be of the church militant. It was to Bill's love of the "manly art" that travellers were indebted for a radical shortening of the time schedule of many a journey between Denver and the mountain town, when there chanced to be a boxing match of an afternoon at either end of the route; and the timid "tenderfoot," whose luckless fate it was to be a passenger on such an occasion, would get an experience of lively mountain coaching the recollection of which made his hair resist the brush for many a week afterward.

This long digression shows how strong a hold the old fashion of travel has on the memory of the colonist. The coach and its driver had come to be regarded among us as typical features of the Plains and of the overland trail, and as much associated with them in the mind as the Indian or the buffalo; and while there was much about both coach and savage — and driver too, perhaps — that could be easily dispensed with, and without sacrifice of comfort or pleasure, it is hard to suppress one's regret at seeing everything that invested the old-time journey with a bit of the picturesque and the romantic, and enlivened it occasionally with a spice of adventure, so ruthlessly and abruptly driven off the scene, even though the displacement represents the march of progress.

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VI

The Twenty-first of May, 1874.

It has come at last!

We have been predicting it, discussing it, dreading it — doing everything, in fact, but preparing for it — for lo! these ten years. To-day the town has been laid low by fire; and to-night a thousand luckless people — half-crazed men, hysterical women, and weeping little ones — are camped on the mountain-side, under the open sky, while the stars shine down upon a broad level waste of glowing cinders in the plateau below them where this morning stood their homes.

At first blush it seems to our excited minds as great a calamity as that which overtook the great prairie city less than three years ago. Relatively it is as momentous in its results; and, curiously enough, its beginnings were equally paltry and contemptible. Chicago went up in smoke from the kick of an Irishwoman's cow; and to-day Central has been sacrificed as a burnt-offering to the wooden image of a Chinese joss.

It has been a notable day in the history of the little town; at one time, indeed, it threatened to figure as the closing date of that history. It is certain at all events to stand forever prominent in the town's chronology, as it surely will for all time in the memories of those who took part in the stirring drama that was enacted here between dawn and dusk — for although the time measured but a few hours, the various phases of the desperate fight for home, and property, and life itself, followed so closely one upon another, in such bewildering detail, and in an atmosphere of such mad excitement, as to suffice for the experience of a lifetime. It has been an awful, pitiful, sorrowful day, prolific in its exhibitions of courage and recreancy, humor and pathos, generosity and cupidity, the serious and the grotesque, the wildly exciting and the strange quiet of despair; the best, and, sad to say, at times the worst in human nature, have come to the surface with the quickly shifting scenes of hour after hour throughout the day. Fortunately, with all its misery, and in spite of its wild chaos, all the human figures in the drama seem to be accounted for, as soon as a general muster is found practicable.

It was a beautiful morning that ushered in this eventful May day. The sun shone bright and warm from a clear blue sky, and looked down upon a thrifty, prosperous little town, quietly busy as usual with its many industries, and with nothing of portent in the still air to indicate in the slightest degree the frightful nearness of the doom that hung over it. There was only the ever-present danger lurking in the fact that the town was closely built of frame houses and log cabins, bordering on narrow streets, and on which the intense, dry heat of the Colorado sun had beaten steadily for a dozen summers, and rendered as combustible as tinder: a danger which was within every one's knowledge, and which had indeed been forced on the public attention and threshed till threadbare in the many discussions of ways and means of fighting fire when fire should come — for as to this latter all were agreed; and only recently the watchful burgomaster and his little council had invested much public money in beautifully painted fire-buckets, imported from the East; a fire company had been formed, and faithfully drilled in their manipulation; a fire-bell was set up that could be heard all over the hills to call the people together; and there were the gulches to furnish the water. Surely every contingency had been foreseen, and every emergency provided against, except ——

By the middle of the morning everything had settled down into the usual humdrum routine of the day: every one was in his accustomed place, the bread-winner underground, the child in the gray stone school-house on the hill-side, or the merchant in his shop; and except for the continuous passage of the quartz-wagons on their way to the mills below, there was nothing in the streets to disturb the tranquillity that usually marked them at that hour of a summer morning. Suddenly a cry is heard, and a light wreath of smoke rises in the air over by the foot of Spring gulch — an obscure corner of the town — and two or three frightened Chinamen emerge hurriedly into the little side street at the end of which is the frame shanty they use as a laundry. Their hysterical jabberings direct attention to the building, and quickly a crowd is drawn to the scene. A few cool-headed white men realize that a fire has started in this nest of dry frames, and without delay the fire-bell is rung, the precious buckets are handed out, and a line of willing hands quickly formed to the gulch, glad of so early an opportunity for a practical demonstration of the discipline of the last few months, and confident of their ability to gallantly master the common enemy forthwith.

But now that the time for action has come, in one dread moment is revealed the terrible truth, which none has dreamed of — the one emergency overlooked in the weighty deliberations of the fathers of the commune — the gulch is dry!

This is at half-past nine o'clock. A few minutes before, these now helpless Pagans, in going through some idiotic idol worship, probably to invoke the favor of Buddha on the laundry business, were burning perfumed sticks and sending blazing curled papers up the chimney of their wretched frame shack, and some of these got foul of the woodwork. Now that they gradually become aware of the mischief they have started, and hear the cry of "No water!" as it is passed along the street, and note the black looks and threatening gestures that mark the fast gathering crowd, they somehow manage to slink away, and are soon lost sight of and temporarily forgotten in the threat of the terrible calamity that now confronts the people, and for a moment awes them into silence, as the full significance of the appalling discovery of a dry gulch gradually sinks into their excited brains.

The flames, however, have burst out of the roof of the Chinese shack, and, guided by the light prevailing current, have already leaped over and licked up the roofs of two or three adjoining shanties, before the crowd has thrown off its stupor, and begun to cast about for other means of staying their further progress toward Main street — a course which they seem to be following as accurately as though drawn thither by a magnet. Axes are procured, and gallant and perilous work is done squarely in the teeth of the advancing fire, in the attempt to make a gap in its road by demolishing two or three frames just ahead of it; but the fighters have barely time to jump for their lives before the flames, which have gathered strength and intensity in every foot of their progress, leap over the space and attack with fury the last little row of frames that stand between them and the town's principal thoroughfare, which lies at right angles to their present course. And all this is the work of a short quarter of an hour.

Now a general alarm is sounded, and it's "fall in everybody" to save the town. But indeed there is no need of a general alarm: the fire has been its own advance courier, and the whole town is now aroused, and, conscious of its own danger, is already crowding into the streets. There are a few scattering bricks in the long rows of frames on Main street, and at first the hope is indulged in that these may prove barriers in the course of the destroyer: they will anyhow insure a few minutes' grace, during which, if the worst comes, much may be saved from the stores that thickly line the thoroughfare — and the work of salvage begins. Help is plenty, and soon the street is piled with a curious conglomeration of goods for its whole length; these are in turn taken up by other willing hands, to be deposited in some not yet ascertained place of safety; some indeed are carried to the bricks, nearer to the advancing fire than their original place of deposit, so supreme is the confidence in their resisting qualities — a confidence, alas! soon to be dissipated, as the fire with gathered strength spitefully melts them to the ground in its headlong course. With one wild leap it crosses Main street, and turning to the right, it marches on a resistless way in two parallel lines down toward the town's centre.

The street is long — it is the main artery of the town. At its lower end it intersects at right angles another business thoroughfare, hardly second in importance. Toward the head of this, and but fifty yards above the intersection, facing each other on opposite sides of the street, are the town's largest two buildings, the Teller House and the Masonic Temple; and these are such solid structures of brick and stone as to afford a good fighting chance of stopping the flames at this point and saving the residence section. Some old wells have been uncovered close by in the frantic hunt for water, and a water reserve has been found in the hotel itself, together with hose, ladders and other paraphernalia, and all these may be used to good purpose if effort is organized and concentrated here. The decision is quickly made, and it is so ordered.

A backward glance up Main street discovers the utter hopelessness of wasting labor there. There is still a short half-hour before the fire, with all its gluttonous appetite, can lick up everything in its course and turn the corner; but that it will do so goes without saying. The flames are leaping in forked tongues fifty feet across the roadway, or from one roof to another in either row over spaces where some lower building intervenes. The street must go — it is now but "*sauve qui peut*" for those who dwell thereon, and the word is passed along. It is a hard message to the dazed merchants, standing guard over the piles of goods at their doorways — still waiting in the hope that grows feebler each minute that help of some kind may reach them in the slim margin of time yet left to them. When they at last realize its full import, they make a few more weak, random efforts at salvage of goods, but these prove so nearly futile that in a few minutes, with the recklessness of despair, they tacitly surrender. The scene has already become one of awful grandeur, and they stand fascinated at the fierce approach of the flames toward them; indeed, some laugh in a wild sort of way when at last the van of the fiery column begins its attack on the particular tenement which (in most cases) encloses all their worldly possessions. And there are some further odd touches of nature: one weeps; another laments his neglect of only last week to renew certain insurance, and reflects bitterly on the "might have been;" and a third, mayhap of a nobler strain, is even able to indulge in a touch of sentiment at being so ruthlessly dislodged from his long-accustomed place, or at seeing the flames lay such violent hands on his own personal belongings.

There is a still more curious feature attending this early but inevitable surrender of Main street to the flames, in the motley character of some others of the people, who with their possessions are thus for the first time all thrown together upon the street at the same hour of daylight. Central is a little town, and every one is supposed to know his neighbor;

but even a little town may have its *cul de sac*, its back doors, and its unfragrant secrets. There are those who vegetate in close and dingy upper rooms, or gloomy attic corners, at the tops of the business buildings; some, indeed, whose faces are not unfamiliar, but many more who rarely appear on the streets except at night, and whose acquaintance comprehends but a restricted circle, and that not a select or representative portion of the community. Out they are driven, *sans ceremonie* — blinking when they strike the sunshine as though not much accustomed to see life under the full blare of day. Other groups comprise women and children whom comparative poverty and a shrinking pride have forced to hide themselves in these undesirable upper tenements; and these hurry to the street with such bewildered, frightened looks, and with such miserable little bits of their paltry household goods, as to invest the scene with a strong touch of pathos. Fortunately for them, and for every one, it is the mild and pleasant summer time; the rainy season has not yet set in, the nights are short, and there is no especial suffering to be dreaded from the weather because of their thus literally having the roofs taken from over their heads.

By a common impulse this strangely assorted crowd, after pausing a moment to survey the work of the destroyer, wend their way in a long procession — without a leader, but mutually obeying a natural instinct — to the foot of the street, thence around the bank corner and up the hill to the next street parallel to the one below, until they gain a position secure from the flames, and sufficiently elevated to view the whole scene of devastation in fiercely active operation at their feet. Here they camp, as it were, under the open sky, the women and children in shrinking groups gathering their household goods about them; the erstwhile male hermits of no family attachments light their pipes and sullenly look down upon the scene, helplessly inactive, for there is nothing else for them to do. Presently their numbers are increased by the stricken merchants, their arms laden with incongruous bits of salvage, pulled from the shelves or from the street piles at the last moment without regard to value, class or character, and so odd and varied that they form, with many similar additions, both of people and of goods, throughout the day, not the least odd of the many strange features of this general picture, which by night-fall will be so expanded as to embrace fully a thousand homeless people, ranged in lines, terrace-like, one above the other, on the face of the mountain which overlooks Central on the west, and forms the middle and larger section of the amphitheatre of hills by which the town is enclosed.

Meantime reinforcements in generous number are coming in from immediately roundabout; and the telegraph has spread the news abroad, so that by noon, from as far away as Golden, fire-engines and men are arriving by special trains hastily called into service; and offers of help are rushing in over the wires from many towns with a generous alacrity which is none the less welcome because it will avail nothing. Intense excitement still reigns everywhere, but the confusion of the first hour has given way to order and method in the measures now adopted as alone promising to be wholly effectual; and these are being applied to good purpose at various widely separated points, with the view of restricting the area of the fire's possible ravages.

A determined stand is made at the Teller House, which is successful after a stubborn fight of two or three hours. Down the long reach of the same street, (Lawrence,) however, the fire is of necessity allowed to work its own sweet will on the closely built frame and log structures on either side, until a corner is reached where two other substantial bricks combine with a fair bit of open space to give the fire-fighters a chance to check its progress. Here much the same scenes are enacted as previously on Main street; and here also, as at the hotel, the fire is kept from creeping up the hill-side and attacking the residences on the first tier above the street, which have already been emptied of the most portable of their contents, while their occupants, ready for flight, stand guard in the doorways and on the porches, anxiously watching the frightful march of the flames eastward along the street beneath them, until they are met and conquered at the brick corner and forced to turn south for lack of something to feed upon. This brings them back in time to their place of beginning, and completes a parallelogram, within which they viciously continue their work of destruction until the whole enclosure is leveled with the ground, save two or three isolated bricks which have miraculously survived the ordeal, and which, rising as they do here and there, serve but to accentuate the completeness of the surrounding ruin.

And all this has occupied but a half-dozen hours of a summer day — not so very long, perhaps, nor would the area count for much in an ordinary ward of a large city; but the damage is not to be computed by any measurement of time or space. As for the latter, it is enough that the very heart of the little town has been eaten out, as though by a cankerous sore, which is indeed strikingly symbolized by the glowing bed of cinders that now covers what was the town's active centre only this morning, throbbing with vigorous life. And as for time, many have lived years in these few hours.

It has been easy enough to describe the course and the work of the fire itself, leaving as it has done a trail so broad and deep behind it; but how shall one depict properly the thousand happenings of such a day, sad and serious, grim and grotesque, pathetic and ludicrous? Noble work well done has been the one overshadowing feature, and the most ideal, inspiring unselfishness has not been lacking; while, on the other hand, there have been some doings which one hesitates to record: we have not only seen men vicious enough to pilfer, but others — figures at least bearing the semblance of men — so inhumanly base as to withhold their help when called upon until they could sell their time and labor for a price. This is the worst blot on the day's record. They were not many, nor, I am glad to say, were they native to the soil, these human (or inhuman) bipeds: neither were they so lacking in common prudence as to repeat their dastardly offer; and they were wise enough, also, to lose themselves in the crowd as rapidly as possible when their identity became known.

In the late afternoon, when some measure of order is restored and the fire at last under control, the Teller House becomes the natural rendezvous of the burnt-out citizens and the exhausted fire-fighters, and by-and-bye it is overrun with a stranger gathering than ever did or ever will again come together within its walls. Whatever may have been the social differences in the town yesterday are for the time forgotten, both here and on the streets, in that "one touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin." Barriers were indeed "burned away" in the great catastrophe, and now the general welfare is the one common concern of all. It is a still excited and reckless, but withal a jovial, sympathetic crowd, exchanging experiences and congratulations, fighting the day's battles o'er again, counting heads, computing losses, and thanking God that it is no worse.

Toward evening the rumor gets abroad that a brick warehouse of one of the larger mercantile firms, located over near where the fire began, and which has been threatened all day, contains in its stock a large quantity of various spirits and is still in danger. A corps is at once organized to strip the building of its contents, and in a few minutes cases of bottled goods and casks full of liquor are piled up in the roadway. These are soon surrounded by a howling crowd, still abnormally excited by the day's work. Some of these are men desperate from their losses, and only too ready to secure temporary forgetfulness; others, who have had nothing to lose, but who have drifted here and there through the day, helping bravely in this place, or aimlessly watching the fire in another; and to these are added the "flotsam and jetsam" of the town. The temptation is strong, and the restraints few. With the first cask opened — accidentally or otherwise — there can be but one result. The liquor soon begins to act on their overwrought nerves, and they undergo in rapid succession all the various phases which alcohol viciously delights in exhibiting in men when reducing them to subjection. They laugh — but with a hideous cackle that lacks any savor of joyousness; they cry — but it is the pitiful wail of imbeciles; they rave and swear, in sheer madness; they become maudlin, and embrace one another; many fall exhausted, and are gathered up and carried away; the ranks are recruited from stragglers attracted by the din, and the wild saturnalia goes on for hours; they dance and sing, and the choruses continue far into the night, growing by-and-bye more fitful and subdued, from sheer exhaustion, until they finally subside, as it might seem, into a sort of dirge over the ruins of the devoted town. No more sadly grotesque feature has marked this day of strange happenings.

Meanwhile the sun has set on a scene of

such varied and curious parts as are rarely presented in the same grouping in a lifetime. On the mountain-side, at the head of the canyon, where the burnt-out people have taken refuge, camp-fires shine out in terraced rows, almost up to the sky-line, marking here where a family have reunited after the day's dispersions, or there where a motley group have come together in a hap-hazard, happy-go-lucky way, each member of either group bringing with him something as a contribution to the mess — a sack of flour, perhaps, or a side of bacon, hastily pulled out of the kitchen of the burning house; or it may be something, absurdly useless, filched from the salvage of some one of the stores. The fires are scarcely needed for warmth in this beautiful May weather, but one must eat, and so, after the day's exacting labors and struggles, they light them for supper, and afterward crowd about them for company's sake, and keep them alive far into the night. The effect of these camp-fires is highly picturesque to the looker-on, or would be could he forget for the moment the deep touch of pathos that is blended with the picture.

Below them, in the triangular canyon where this morning were scores of buildings — many of them homes — now stand at intervals a few blackened walls, rising out of a wide, slightly inclined plain, which is bounded only by the three hills, and marked by living embers of a uniform cherry red, except at times, when fanned by the night breeze, a burst of flame starts them up here and there into a glow, but only long enough to make the general desolation the more marked and perceptible, and then goes out like the light of a candle. At such intervals are seen, perhaps, a group of men about a bank or other vault, with an exposed safe, marking the spot where a business house has been, and indicating in a silent way the proportions to which it has been reduced. These groups are extemporized guards. The trains that brought help to the distressed town this afternoon were boarded in the confusion by roughs and thugs from the valley, who, with the first rumors of the fire, had sniffed the scent of plunder; and now on the edge of the evening they have appeared here and there in groups of two or three, furtively surveying the stricken district, and aptly illustrating the scriptural proverb, that "where the carcass is, there will the vultures be gathered together." They will meet with a short shrift if they attempt to investigate the ruins too closely to-night, and they are very likely to eat an early breakfast and return by the railroad ties to-morrow morning without any unnecessary delay. Indeed, they have already received notice to that effect, in language both concise and incisive.

On the streets, groups of men are seen as in silhouette, surveying the relics of their property of yesterday, or lending a hand to smother some new bit of blaze that bursts out now and then without perceptible cause in this or that quarter. On the hill to the north, where the better class of residences, although seriously threatened more than once during the day, have passed safely through the ordeal, lights are seen in every house, and kind hands are busy in preparing food or getting together clothing to alleviate the necessities of the less fortunate people who are camped under the stars on the western hill.

It is long past midnight before the little town, after the terrible experiences of the day, finally sinks into the fitful, unrefreshing slumber of exhaustion.

VII.

From the Fire to the Centennial.

It is a sorry awakening the next morning for the shelterless people on the western hill. They have managed to snatch but a few hours of blessed forgetfulness out of the short summer night before the early sun blazes down upon them, banishing all chance of further sleep, and mercilessly recalling their bewildered senses to a realization of their changed condition by lighting up, as though with a mocking vividness, the great sloping plain of still glowing cinders below them which represent all that is left of the homes and warehouses of yesterday. A dark, lowering day would indeed seem more in harmony with the picture of wreckage and destruction that the morning dawns upon.

They are soon all astir, these hill-side refugees, for shelter of some kind must be found, at least for the women and children, before night falls again. But they are not long left helpless: those of their fellow townspeople whose homes have escaped the destroyer are keenly alive to their necessities, as they showed last night by the promptness with which they tendered them relief; and now this morning they are up betimes, to continue their merciful ministrations. It is likely that never before in the colony's history have its people as a whole looked upon daylight at so early an hour. Never before, also, was the colony's spirit of fellowship so nobly exhibited as in the hearty and generous efforts now put forth to succor the homeless ones. Before night they have been nearly all taken in under roof or in some way absorbed in the community, and only a few scattering fires thereafter indicate the location of the isolated campers-out here and there on the hill.

A local relief committee is promptly formed, money, provisions and clothing subscribed, and systematic help extended to those in need. Generous offers of assistance pour in over the wires from the towns of mountain and valley, but one by one they are courteously declined. The colony is proudly sensitive, and will allow none but itself to care for its own; and in turn the individual colonists, however disabled by the catastrophe, are as a whole too sturdily independent to long remain pensioners upon the common bounty. Of course there are many cases among the stricken ones that have no choice but to accept relief for the better part of the summer; but the committee's work is largely finished within a month after its creation.

As for the town in general, there is little time lost in idle bewailing. After the first flush of excitement has passed away, and the people begin to recover by rest and sleep from the exhaustion and strain of the disaster, the fire-stricken sufferers of the business section face the occasion manfully. Before the ground is fairly cool, the work of reconstruction begins; and long before snow falls again, a new town has begun to rise on the ashes of the old.

Stone and brick take the place of logs and frame; and what once seemed its death-blow proves after all, and is finally recognized by the community, as a blessing in disguise. Business houses, which immediately after the fire were forced to adapt themselves to novel and in some cases comical conditions in temporary quarters, are by the fall re-established on their old sites in substantial and commodious buildings; "the great fire" has passed into history, to become merely a memory, and to have its annually recurring date made henceforth a festival occasion for the holding of firemen's tournaments, and a convenient and plausible excuse for a public holiday.

Of all the destruction wrought by the fire, I make bold to say there is nothing more keenly regretted as a public loss than that of the Montana Theatre. It's like parting with a familiar friend to lose this primitive log temple of the muses, in spite of its homeliness and its many roughnesses and crudities. It certainly had no beauty to boast of, either without or within, yet it was in its way comfortable and roomy enough; and during the dozen years of its reign as our one home of the drama, we got from it season after season more real solid enjoyment than we shall probably ever realize hereafter in any new construction that may seek to fill its place, however ornate or pretentious. It was in the good old days of Langrishe and his company that we grappled it to our hearts, as we did them, and since their final dispersion two or three years back, it has sheltered many "occasional" stars on their way across the country, besides being our one gathering place for public amusements, and functions of one kind and another.

In addition to the regular round of "stock" business that Langrishe gave us, he would every now and then bring out some especial star as a central figure around which his own little group would revolve, and this, in those days of long distances and slow transport, meant much in the way of managerial enterprise. Who doesn't remember Annette Ince, and her repertoire of tragic roles — Lady Macbeth, for instance? She was an actress of no mean repute, let me tell you of the new generation who knew her not, any more than you know "the legitimate" as it was played by *artistes* trained from their youth up in the old-fashioned stock companies that are now, alas! no more, and who reached the top only by sheer force of hard, conscientious labor co-operating with natural ability.

Then there were those Clifton sisters who shone in melodrama — especially the elder, Marion I think, who, strange to say, was the subtler in her art as she was the weightier in physique. And can you ever forget sitting until the stroke of twelve listening to George Waldron's "Hamlet," and then readjusting yourself to your seat for an extra hour while George Thompson cleared the air of ghosts and melancholy with "Handy Andy," or some such laughter-making farce, so that your sleep might not succumb to the four hours' strain of tragedy? — that same George Thompson who was so excruciatingly funny that he would night after night demoralize the veterans of the company on the stage while going through his Dutch and Irish impersonations, and who was yet so versatile that he could act with credit a dignified leading part in a serious historical drama, or sing you "The Lancashire Lass" or some such sweet and bright old English song as a supplement to a night's programme.

Can you not still see the comely Mrs. Waldron in her statuesque poses, or Mrs. Irwin inhaling the charcoal fumes to end her misery, in that sterling stand-by of the Winter Garden, one of the last of the fine old school of the realistic melodrama, "The Streets of New York?" And, later on, Allen as "poor, hunted-down, broken-hearted Bob Brierly?" and so on, and so on. Ah! such times will never come again — those days when every player in the company, from the leading man down to the most consumptive looking "Roman soldier," did "his level best" in a conscientious, painstaking way, and when we never left the theatre on any night without feeling that we had got our money's worth in full measure, and of the good old orthodox kind;

and we carried away with us no memory of the hard seats, or the severely plain auditorium, the bizarre curtain, or the poorly clothed stage. The town indeed must have its theatre, and some day, no doubt, it will build a new one; but however much it may be made "a thing of beauty," I doubt if it can ever be to the future community what the old Montana was to the people up to as late even as a year or two ago.

—— From "the Fire" to the Centennial would seem a fairly long reach in which to find no incident of sufficient prominence to serve as a typical reminder of the period; but the first and greater part of the two years' span is marked by a quiet routine, both in the social colony and in the community at large. That is not to say, however, that there is nothing worth recording, were one writing a detailed history. The colony has long before this reached its zenith with respect to numbers, while its *personnel* has apparently taken settled and permanent form; and its affairs are normally prosperous, in spite of the temporary unsettlement of the fire. Its "routine," in a business way, means the steady pursuit of its various enterprises by a quietly industrious people; while socially it comprehends, in its hours of relaxation, the production of as much in the way of entertainment, public or private, as can easily be disposed of within the time limits, although all this may be attended with little noise or ostentation.

If we have such a thing as a social "season," you may trust the colony to see that its days (or nights) are so comfortably filled that time need not hang heavy on any one's hands. Many and various are our methods of diversion, both the scope and the means of which have been largely expanded since the coming of the railroads; although it might be rash to say that we extract proportionately more enjoyment from them than formerly. Some of these methods are conventional, some still original and novel, but never formal. While we are no longer confined to the primitive makeshifts of the earlier days, nor hampered by what I have called the iron-bound conditions of our original isolation, the unrestricted freedom of dress and manner to which we then became habituated still governs our social intercourse. There may be more dress-coats here and there, and these may be held by their wearers under better settled and more specific tenures than the exceptional few that graced our assemblies of a few years ago, but there is nothing in the social code that makes them *de rigueur*. Neither is there as a rule much ceremony attending invitation and acceptance; and indeed the doings themselves are often impromptu.

The colonists are gregarious; it's an ill-favored word, but fitly expressive. They like to get together, whether as a whole or in scattered groups; and when a more than usual lapse threatens to mark the social calendar, they seldom fail to evolve some novel attraction as an excuse for assembling. The club dances, of course, are perennial, and trip merrily along, at convenient intervals, dividing their favors between the Teller House and Turner Hall. "Sociables" of every conceivable kind, and with or without purpose, other than the fun of getting together, sooner or later familiarize the colonists with every colonial domestic interior. The lady colonists, many of them at least, are famous as dinner-givers, while a few are experts in the art, and these often exercise their talents in quiet competition, creating no friction, but adding largely to the bodily comfort of the bachelors, young and old. In one direction you will find a group devoted to cards, while in another there will be one that affects literature with serious purpose. A third and conspicuous group is entirely given over to music, of which more later on.

In a public way, you have already seen that we are generous and enthusiastic patrons of the theatre; but the play with us is not a "continuous performance," in this country of vast areas and few companies; and, notwithstanding the railroads, we still have often long intervals between the acts. At such times everything from a church fair to a spelling match is warmly welcomed and liberally patronized. Should the Legislature be in session, and show any dangerous tendencies toward whimsical enactments for the internal government of the Territory, a "Third House" is speedily organized, and the regular body down at the capital instructed ironically as to how laws should be made so as to best contribute to the general welfare. This serves the double purpose of amusing the people and warning the solons against ill-considered experiments in legislation. The reigning Governor is at the same time cautioned to be sparing both of recommendations and rhetoric in his messages to a people who have had no voice in his political elevation, and who, jealous of their prerogatives, are at times disposed to regard him as an alien interloper; and that he may have no excuse for falling into error, the Third House, through its Governor, generously prepares and submits "messages" which embody its ideas of proper form for state papers. These various productions of this self-constituted auxiliary body might appear a trifle anomalous if they ever reached the statute books, but the sessions help keep the ball rolling in the way of public entertainment; for, however else the House may be regarded, it can rarely be charged with being either dull or slow in its peculiar legislative methods.

—— The dawn of the Centennial year — the latter part of the span — is bright with the promise of great things in the near future. There is no need of factitious aids to arouse or enchain the public interest. The air is full of anticipation. Not only is the coming summer to witness the celebration of the nation's centenary, but it is already well settled that this memorial year is to be marked by the metamorphosis of the old and sturdy but dependent Territory into young and sovereign statehood. It is to be no longer a "province," ruled from afar by an Administration in whose counsels the people have no share, and whose acts often indicate that it has little knowledge of and less sympathy with the peculiar conditions of pioneer life in this part of the continent.

The change means much to the entire commonwealth, but especially to the little mountain town — the hub around which all Territorial affairs, political and otherwise, have generally heretofore revolved; and it at once proceeds to assert itself, and to take the lead in the various movements that are scheduled for this momentous year. Its voice and influence have already been potent in helping to frame the new charter which the people afterwards approve with little suggestion of dissent; and shortly after, when Central, in common with every town, city and village in the entire country, is celebrating the nation's joint festival of Independence Day and Centennial — and it does it with all its might and main, with the thunder of giant powder echoing all day long from hill-top to hill-top — the Territory becomes at last one of the great sisterhood, and, because of the happy conjunction of date and events, enters the Union with its appropriate title of "Centennial State."

It is largely because of its recognized activity and prominence in affairs that for years have been steadily leading up to this great culmination, that the district is this year christened the "Little Kingdom of Gilpin" — a title quite as happy as that bestowed on the commonwealth; and if there exist any measure of doubt as to its being as well founded, Central effectually dispels it before the end of the year by demanding and securing for one of its citizens his election as the State's first representative to Congress; and for another as one of the State's first two senators — graciously allowing Denver to name his colleague, who, however, to say the truth, possesses a strong claim to preferment by the "little kingdom" in the fact of his having been himself one of its prominent and loyal subjects in the early days.

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VIII.

An Old Opera, and a New Opera House.

Central is nothing if not musical. Indeed, so pronounced are its tendencies in this respect that it is rather odd that I should have waited until now to state the fact, unless it may be that I expected it would reveal itself between the lines from the beginning — it seemed so much a matter of course.

Musical? It might almost be as necessary to say that Central is a mining community; for if there is any one thing that the colony prides itself upon a little more than another, among its many artistic accomplishments, it is, and always has been, its general musical proficiency, its critical appreciation, and its creative or interpretative abilities; and, indeed, its confident attitude in this respect is by no means without reason, and it can safely venture to be judged by its record.

There never was a time, from its earliest days, when music did not form a material feature of any entertainment, public or private, whatever its general character, nor when there failed to be some one or some group capable of rendering it most acceptably. In the period of our first chapter, when Darby was warbling his sweet Irish ballads in one little drawing-room, there was often gathered another section of the little social world, a short way up the same street, listening to German *Lieder* rendered by a quartette headed by Wolters or Stoelting, while Louis Huepeden, "from the Leipzig Conservatoire," (as his professional cards truthfully recorded,) varied the programme by interpreting Chopin sonatas with artistic skill at the piano which through the day served in the instruction and practice of his select private pupils — and this within the unplastered walls of a log cabin, a full dozen years ago, mark you.

The colony's musical talent was very fairly distributed in these earlier days, also, among the various church choirs, and contributed largely toward bringing together the regular weekly audiences all the year round, attracted by services which embraced sacred music of quite as high a character as one would ordinarily hear in the churches of an Eastern city, but would hardly expect on the frontier, and in individual instances — such as one recalls in Langford's noble bass, or Cushman's musical baritone — rendered quite as well if not with as good effect, after making due allowance for the bad acoustics of small and crowded buildings, and the irritating qualities of ambitious but inadequate melodeons or reed organs.

Later on, as the colony increased in numbers of its womankind, the musical contingent became gradually strengthened by many female voices, some of exceptional quality and culture, while also supplemented by the addition of instrumentalists, of high education and finish; and thenceforward, in all the years that have followed, it has been more than anything else a question of inclination, or of convenience in coming together, as to when and how often the colony should be indulged in the artistic interpretation of high-class music. Happily, the inclination as a rule has been nearly ever-present, and happily, also, though contrary to the general recorded experience, the musically-endowed groups have dwelt together in unity, and allowed no paltry envies or petty jealousies to disturb the general harmony: — a phase of character strikingly illustrated in the many informal gatherings of the little social world, under whatever circumstances they may have been called together. At some time or other before the final dispersion there would invariably be a spontaneous breaking forth into song, natural and unrestrained, and than which nothing more charming could be conceived; and indeed in no better way also could the musical qualities or acquirements of the colony be judged than when at such a time listening to the unfolding of the comprehensive repertoire, entirely impromptu, embracing all manner and kind of song, rendered delightfully without regard to order or limit, and with never a glance at a score, written or printed.

It would surely make one of the most significant and proudest memorials of the little colony's achievements could there be gathered together the various programmes of the many artistic occasions in which the musical group made their formal bows to audiences during these last dozen years; and these would also demonstrate more effectively than anything else the truth of the statement which forms the text of the present chapter. But with all these past musical attainments, by which it has established its reputation, and become recognized throughout the Territory as a centre of musical culture, and holds its place by so certain and well-admitted a tenure that it can be coldly tolerant and critical whenever an *artiste* or a group of ambitious amateurs come in, as they occasionally venture to do, from the little metropolis down on the Plains, to woo its favor or its shekels — with all this, Central had not attempted as yet to present an opera, grand or otherwise, as a whole, before this present year.

It had found easy and pleasant work in cantatas, and at times even entire scenes from leading operas had been presented successfully and with much *eclat;* but no impresario had as yet appeared, to gather together the entire musical contingent and train them in the full musical interpretation and stage action of any complete work of one of the great masters. It remained for one ambitious and impulsive young man, himself only a modest unit in the musical group, but impelled by his serene confidence in Central's ability to accomplish anything it might undertake — it fell to him, I say, to first make the audacious suggestion, the adoption of which has in due time enabled Central to add this crowning musical effort to its record, and made this year of 1877 so notable in its artistic history, by producing the "Bohemian Girl" — doubly notable, indeed, because of such a thing as an opera of any class or grade having never yet been attempted, by professionals or amateurs, anywhere else in the Territory.

All very true: but after the first flush of enthusiasm with which his suggestion is accepted and his company gathered together, the luckless youth is not slow in discovering that, like that of the policeman in "The Pirates," the impresario's lot is "not a happy one"—although in his case it is only fair to say that the greater part of his troubles arise from unfortunate conditions in the town itself, rather than from any lack of hearty co-operation on the part of his troupe; for indeed his *artistes*, chorus and all, in addition to the labor demanded of their vocal and dramatic powers, are so loyally helpful that they cheerfully set to work and create their own costumes, in the absence of any commercial stock in the town which might be made over for the occasion; and in this they exhibit also the same skill and ingenuity that have ever characterized them since the conditions of the primitive days first trained them to trust to their own resources. True, there are some rare exceptions.

There is, for instance, one of the gentlemen of the chorus, who happens to have a private possession in the shape of an elaborate Highlander's dress, and whose sense of the congruities is not strong enough to overcome his desire to utilize this in setting off his handsome person. He is proof against both argument and entreaty, and as a result he finds his place among the audience on the eventful evening rather than on the stage, where he should properly be, helping to chant the pleasures of the gypsy's life, "that all would like to lead," as the libretto says, with insistent but perhaps unconvincing iteration.

Naturally the first necessity of the production is a suitable theatre; and since the great fire has disposed of the old "Montana," which at least had a roomy stage, with scenery, curtains, and furniture, such as it was, all ready to hand, the only available place is now the Belvedere Theatre, (the old "Wisebart Hall" rechristened,) in which the only original Christy Minstrels and the chocolate-colored Mlle. Bonfanti made their debut some years back; and this means limited space for the audience and a large amount of tinkering and refitting of one kind and another for the stage. For instance, "Glen's" great scenic work in the wings and background, so successful on the former occasion, is so strictly local in character that it will hardly pass now for a section of ancient Bohemia, even with the friendliest and most sympathetic of audiences; and both the painter and the carpenter must be called in for radical changes.

But even this seems as nothing when the manager arrives, in turn, at the indispensable item of an orchestra. There is indeed almost a surfeit of pianos and pianists, but of course he can't utilize but one of each. His difficulties would soon fade away could all his needs be as easily met and as satisfactorily filled as in this case; for the choice of pianist naturally falls, without discussion, on our most accomplished amateur, who proves indeed a strong reliance on the great occasion, and fairly divides the public honors with the more visibly prominent people behind the footlights.

So also does good fortune attend the choice of a leader, who brings his violin as well as his baton to the rescue, and does willing and skillful service with both; but — to travesty an old saw — "one violin will not make an orchestra," and the impresario is for a time at his wit's end.

There are indeed violins galore in the town, and some reeds — but the practised combinations among these are restricted to those who furnish music for the "light fantastic" at club and other functions; besides, their class, such as it is, is professional, and amateurs only are eligible on this occasion. Some of these are too timid or too modest, and others, who possess both voice and instrument, prefer to join the stage group, even if only in the chorus, and share in the expected applause of the night, which they may fear is liable to pass unheeding over the dark little orchestra pit, and bestow itself on the figures made more conspicious by the brilliant light of the stage — from which a fine moral might be drawn, were there space here for it. However, after much effort a violin or two and a flute, in the hands of high-grade amateurs, are finally secured, but still one great desideratum remains unsatisfied — a piece of sounding brass, to give effect to bits of military action here and there in the play, and to brace up the chorus now and then if it shows signs of wavering.

Now, of all the possible possessors of this sorely needed orchestral piece, who should be finally run to earth, after scouring the town, but an old Teutonic citizen who, dearly as he loves his cornet, is mostly denied the pleasure of hearing its ringing tones because of the deafness entailed on him by his daily occupation of hammering away on boiler iron. Strange to say, this does not seem to affect his ability to bring out its good qualities in reasonable harmony with the other instruments about him, as well as in fair conformity to the requirements of the score; and he becomes a willing coadjutor when he learns the necessities of the case. Through perhaps an excess of caution, he is fortified with many cues to provide against his coming in with a blast at the wrong time — the results of which might be embarrassing at certain points of the play; and his accession to the ranks at last makes the orchestra complete, so far as completeness is attainable.

So far, so good. The impresario draws a long breath and congratulates himself on having so easily met and fairly vanquished all obstacles up to this point, and he now sees nothing more serious ahead than a course of necessary rehearsals, which he can surely depend on the loyal good will and warm enthusiasm of his company to carry smoothly to a satisfactory conclusion, under their efficient leader — a comforting reflection, in which indeed he is not doomed to disappointment.

But other matters soon clamor for attention: there are various accessories needed, and these must be found outside the ranks of the musical amateurs. The first act requires an Austrian patrol, under a sergeant, and the lowest permissible minimum is four men, and men familiar with the goose-step. In time a handful of Grand Army "veterans" are rounded up, but a search for costumes develops the fact that no one has seen a uniform in town since the days of Sand Creek. By hook or crook, in a few days these warriors report in some kind of a dress that is finally made to pass with an audience not over familiar with Austrian liveries. It is picturesque, at least. The sergeant, to avail himself of the only officer's uniform procurable, becomes a captain for the nonce — a promotion which really enhances his effectiveness as a stage figure.

With this enlistment of the patrol, however, a new problem is encountered. The house is depended upon for revenues to at least help liquidate the expense of the production. It is small, and will not stand much "papering" — a term the meaning of which now dawns fairly upon the manager, who has already had a faint glimmer of it in settling for an Austrian banner with the black double-eagles, the work of a local artist, which destroys the bill-paying potency of several seats. (Oh, that poor "Glen" were here!) Now the Austrian patrol have American families at home, who, while all warmly interested in their debut, are not especially concerned over the advancement of high art, and who also think the laborer is worthy of his hire; and their decided opinions on the subject occasion the sacrifice of another bunch of desirable seats for the first night. The bogey figure of the "free list" thus begins to assume proportions, while there are yet many things to be provided.

Meanwhile the parts have been cast and accepted with the harmony that always characterizes the colony's strictly musical work, as before remarked. All are heartily striving for an artistic success first of all, and they may fairly expect it — all but poor Thaddeus, whose place the impresario had himself rashly undertaken to fill before he had made a close acquaintance, as he is now rapidly doing, with the exceeding strenuousness of the manager's calling; and it is now, alas!

too late to retreat. Now Thaddeus in the play certainly has his hands full in eluding the Austrian guard, defying the Count, extolling the fair land of Poland, and beseeching Arline to "remember" him, and all in notes fairly high up in the staff — so that whatever spare time he has is generally employed in nursing his voice and keeping it well oiled up, so that he can do these various things gracefully and with good effect. It is not at all probable that composer Balfe ever intended he should also be obliged to hire the hall, engage the orchestra, haggle over terms with the supernumeraries, write the press notices, get up the "opera books," print the tickets, auction off the seats, maintain order at the back of the stage during the performance, and shoo off the street boys from the side stairway who crowd in at intervals for a stolen peep at the show, and so close as to interfere with the stage entrances at the wings; yet all these sooner or later fall within the range of the varied experience acquired by Thaddeus while filling his dual role.

There comes a time at last when all the various accessories are gathered in, by one means or another, the costumes prepared, and the stage scenery adapted, as well as may be; and then the fateful date of the production is fixed and published. Little is needed, indeed, in the way of advertising, either at home or abroad, as the local social circle has heard or talked of little else for many weeks, while the Denver and other outside musical groups have from the first rumor of the daring enterprise been awaiting the announcement with a properly deferential impatience, and promising a large representation; and when the sale of seats opens, it at once becomes apparent that two performances will be necessary to satisfy the public curiosity.

All this has the good effect of putting the amateurs on their mettle. The chorus rehearsals at once drop the character of *conversaziones*, with the music as a pleasant side incident, and take on and maintain to the end the form of serious business. The artistic reputation of the colony is at stake, and with the consciousness of this, the amateurs loyally prepare for the great occasion, so that when the eventful evening finally arrives, they give a brilliant account of themselves in the presence of a house packed to the doors. It is the crowning success of all the colony's years of musical endeavor. There are critical as well as sympathetic elements in their audience, and while there are also those who have come to learn for the first time what manner of show an opera really is, many others are there to whom it will be difficult to invest the rather *passes* maiden of the play with the charm of novelty; still the amateurs have no reason to think that the congratulations showered upon them are not spontaneous offerings and honestly earned.

After a rest of two or three days they prepare for their second performance, with an easy confidence born of their first night's success. The anxious watchfulness of the management is naturally also somewhat relaxed, and as a result the shadow of disaster hovers over them, for an hour or more before the opening, although they are all blissfully unaware of it. The audience in fact has begun to seat itself; Arline, the Queen, the Count — all the *artistes*, one by one, are arriving and going serenely into their dressing-rooms; Devilshoof and most of the chorus, already costumed, are disporting themselves on the stage, or viewing the house through the peep-holes of the curtain; the conductor has even summoned his fiddlers, for a preliminary tuning-up — when some one remarks on the non-appearance of the military figures of the play, and a hurried, nervous search discovers that the Austrian patrol have not yet reported. As they say in "The Mikado," "Here's a how-de-do!" An emissary sent out to scour the town finds them not far away, but also as certainly not "in commission." The manager is hastily summoned, and he meets them grouped together in silent dignity, awaiting a conference. They evidently have a grievance, and the direful fact is soon disclosed that their families have received no passes for this second night. They are proof equally against either soft speech or remonstrance. The audience is filing in, and paid seats are scarce and still in demand, but the warriors are sternly inflexible in their terms:—"No passes, no patrol!" It is a case of base coercion, but it has to be met by unconditional surrender, so that the play may go on.

New laurels are won on this second evening, from an audience largely gathered from outside towns, who have made it a gala occasion and come in groups by special train. They return home and spread the fame of the amateurs to such good purpose that in a day or two Forrester, the reigning professional manager of the day, sends in a generous offer for a Denver engagement, which, however, is declined with thanks. The amateurs are sated with glory for the time, and quite willing to rest upon their laurels. They call a business meeting, pay the bills, and before disbanding astonish their little German conductor by presenting him with their surplus for his loyal services.

This production of the "Bohemian Girl," besides providing us with some weeks of interesting amusement in its preparation and execution, proves of much more lasting and material benefit, not only in suggesting the need of an opera house, but in supplying the necessary enthusiasm to launch the project and carry it through to success. While the memory of our first "opera season" is still fresh, a company is formed and the stock subscribed to generally through the town; a desirable site is secured, and plans are drawn; within a few weeks a handsome stone and brick structure is under way, and early in the following spring the new opera house is opened in a blaze of glory.

It is a great occasion, and shows an intensity of public interest never paralleled in the little town, with the one exception of the hotel opening of six years ago: and it is not to be wondered at, for the new house is to supply the one crying need of the community since the great fire — a need that has been recently more than ever emphasized when *artistes* like Caroline Richings and the great if unamiable Di Murska were compelled to adapt themselves to the meagre appointments of the amateurs' Belvedere Theatre. The house is something to be proud of, for a number of reasons. It is a successful construction in its chief requisites — it is substantial and spacious, though plain, and in its planning it has had the intelligent aid of a number of the travelled professional men of the colony, so that many modern ideas have been incorporated into the designs; and chief among the important results attained are perfect acoustics. Besides, local pride is gratified by the fact of its being the first structure in the State that can properly be called an opera house.

Two evenings are deemed necessary for a fitting inauguration. On the first of these, oblations are to be offered to the lyric, and on the next to the dramatic muse. Once again are the musical amateurs called upon for formal artistic effort, while in addition another group are to exploit their histrionic talents. Weeks of preparation have been devoted to their work, and much is expected of them. "Von," as he is affectionately called by his familiar friends, is master of the ceremonies, and when he comes outside the curtain on the opening night, he faces an audience such as has never before been assembled under one roof in the proud little mountain town. It has gathered from the cities of the plain and from all the hill villages round about, and it is representative of all the best elements of these neighboring communities, large or small, of mountain and valley. Small wonder, then, that "Von's" natural and becoming dignity is tinged with a shade of embarrassment as he proceeds to read the dedicatory poem, in smoothly flowing hexameter, that has been written for the occasion by one of our schoolma'ams who has a facile pen and a happy faculty for versifying. Then the curtain rises on a stage crowded with performers, vocal and instrumental, and a musical programme is unfolded of a character that fairly indicates the high standard of the colony, and rendered in a manner that attests its proficiency, in the art that it assumes most to cultivate. Read the noble list of contributors: Wagner, von Weber, Verdi, Bellini, Rossini, Suppe, De Beriot — are not these names to conjure with? And the chief magician, Herr Robyn, who has lately cast his lot among us — has he not long ago achieved fame in his chosen art in more than one of the musical centres of Europe? Is it strange, then, that next morning the press at home and abroad (for it is well represented) should unite in declaring the evening's renditions the best musical work ever listened to at the hands of amateurs in the entire experience of either State or Territory?

But the house is but half "opened" yet. Imposing and brilliant as have been the exercises of the first night, and large and representative as was the audience, there is even a greater assembly on the next evening, although an increase seems physically impossible. Some of the first-nighters have gone, but others — and more — have come, and they come as before from the valleys as well as the hills. Surely the assemblies of these two evenings will forever remain the most notable in all respects that the house will ever know, even should it stand as long as the rocks on which it is built.

It is a pretty series of stage pictures that this second evening's audience looks upon. Robertson's dainty comedy of "School" is the leading feature, and the parts have been happily cast. The people on the stage — all amateurs — are prominent members of the town's social set, which is largely represented in the audience; and yet, before the curtain falls on the first of the four acts of the half-serious comedy, their identity is lost in the characters of the play, and they are for the time recognized only as Jack Poyntz, and Lord Beaufry, and Bella, and Naomi, and the rest, so finished is the performance with which they surprise their auditors. One of Jerrold's familiar farces rounds up the evening, and brings to its close the most really brilliant public ceremonial that the little town has ever seen, or probably ever will see. One of its curious results is the opening of a heated discussion among the Denver journals as to the immediate need of a similar temple of the muses in the metropolis — a wrangle more or less rancorous, and disclosing a tinge of mortification because of the mountain "provincials" being allowed to take the initiative in advance of the capital city in this particular line of public enterprise.

The new house gets speedily into business after the holiday crowd scatters. Fannie Louise Buckingham, with her "gallant gray," James Melville, (James is a horse,) is one of the first season's attractions in the classic "Mazeppa." Fannie is what you would call a fine figure of a woman; and she holds an impromptu reception one afternoon in the Teller House parlor, which has some unique features which the ladies of the colony will not soon forget, although some of them will be a little chary, perhaps, in refreshing your memory on the subject. Fannie's name, great as it is, is but the first of such a list of prominent professionals as would indicate either that the new house has been particularly fortunate in choosing its time for opening, or that its fame has already unusual attractive power. By way of contrast, perhaps, "Hamlet" and "Richelieu" tread closely in Fannie's footsteps, (or should I say in Melville's hooftracks?) presented by Lindsay, "the young American tragedian," and Mrs. Forrester; the seductive Adah Richmond comes with burlesque and "extravaganza;" then Blind Tom — of course, for Tom has made it his business to see the world, and he is too experienced a traveller to omit Central from his itinerary. Oliver Doud Byron thrills us with a bit of the lurid drama, the Worrell sisters and Denman Thompson cheer us with many laughs, and George Rignold poses before Agincourt as Henry V. — and so on, and so on.

Verily, this year of '78 is a notable one in many ways — and not the least in that it sees the locomotive climb the hills that lie between us and Black Hawk, and bring the railway train at last within hailing distance of every home in the colony.

IX.

The End of the Cycle.

It is with no little hesitancy that I write the above title to what must be the final chapter of this little sketch-book; for I cannot help feeling that in doing so I run the risk of being misunderstood by many good people — personal friends also — who will continue to call Central their home long after this year of 1880, which I have set as the closing one of the fifteen that are here assumed as constituting the "golden age" of the monutain colony. But it must be apparent that the process of disintegration is already under way; and while the town as such remains, and without doubt has before it the promise of a long life, with indeed a larger population and even a greater prosperity than it has yet enjoyed, it must be equally clear — however

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unwelcome the thought — that the exceptional conditions which created for it its peculiar place, and enabled it to hold its distinctive and envious position for all these years, have at last been superseded by the introduction of the railways, the settling up of the surrounding country, the gradual expansion of business throughout the State, and the opening up of vast new mineral regions, which are already attracting a tremendous flow of population to the country, and incidentally giving a great impetus to the building up of the capital city.

The recent wonderful discoveries of the Leadville district are thus far the greatest of these disturbing factors. Many of the colonists have already joined in the stampede to the great carbonate region; many more from business necessity have gone to the metropolis, or are preparing to do so, because of needful changes of base and methods of operation. New faces at the same time are seen in the old camp, which is itself directly experiencing other effects of the general change than mere temporary loss of population; while in the general dispersion and unsettling of things that is in progress, as other hitherto remote parts of the State are now for the first time being brought into connection with the business centres, many of the old colony are going here and there for one reason or another, to take a hand in the opening of new districts, so that it is soon to become a familiar saying that you will find a Gilpin man or men in any mining camp, however distant or obscure, that you may chance to drop into.

It may as well be admitted, therefore, once for all, that the mountain commune has passed into history. As a colony, independent of its surroundings, and sufficient unto itself — holding its own unique place and leading in all Territorial matters as though by inherent right — it has finished its career. Its days are done; but its memory lives, and will ever be kept green in the hearts of the survivors of the cycle just completed. Its story is of exceptional interest, and deserves to be written in some more comprehensive and enduring form than this, let the cynic smile as he will.

What are spread on these few pages are but random reminiscences — desultory sketches — notes of a few typical incidents, jotted down now and then for diversion in an idle hour, presented with some regard to chronological order, it is true, and which it has been a pleasant task to record, but which, as I review them, impress me with their poverty or their meagreness if considered as an attempt at continuous chronicles, which indeed cannot be claimed for them. They can hardly do more than furnish a hint of the nature of the colony's social life during what was in truth its golden cycle. They may perhaps assist in recalling many pleasant memories of that quietly eventful time in the formative period of the Territory; and with this result I must fain be content, conscious as I am of how little, after all, I have recorded of its thousand happenings.

—— Taking one last look over these pages, however, before closing the little book, I find some threads dropped here and there that I am persuaded to gather up and weave into the slender fabric. In glancing back to the story of the early days, I am reminded of how, because of the very location of our domicile, isolated though it was, we long enjoyed almost a monopoly of certain privileges denied to communities far more favored in other respects; of how, with the magnificent depth of mountains back of us, rearing themselves out of an almost untrodden wilderness, at least as yet undisturbed by the tourist and unknown to any guide-book, we lacked not for diversion in the glorious summer-time; of how, within a few miles of home, we could take up the trail over the Berthoud to "The Haystacks," and, leisurely following the Fraser down to the Grand, bring profusion of fish and fowl under unwilling daily contribution to the mess of the summer camp which year after year claimed the whole Middle Park — springs and lake, moor and river — for its royal pleasure-ground.

I recall how, in the lordly license we enjoyed in wandering hither and yon without restraint through the glorious extravagance of

Nature's creations, to which a rugged wildness lent its indescribable charm, we would pick our way over the Range in August by the Snake River Pass, gather snow-balls by the side of Gray's majestic peak, and descend into the beautiful valleys of the Snake, the Swan and the Blue, through the forests to Breckenridge, and over the pass and across the noble expanse of the South Park to the Arkansas and the Twin Lakes, long before the railroads had broken the quiet or marred the beauties of the virgin wilderness. This would mean a nightly camp by the way in the most romantic spots on tumbling mountain streams, alive with gamey trout that had never been pampered in hatcheries; levying *en route* on the thickets of wild berries which marked the trail, to give luxurious variety to the camp fare; leisurely travelling a hundred miles or more before making a long terminal camp on the shore of those glittering pools of emerald water, ten thousand feet above the sea; returning by a route which would bring us down through Platte canyon, while still almost a primeval solitude, long years before the stream became subjected to its weekly unmerciful whipping by train-loads of Sunday fishermen from town, and while the red deer still daily found their way in groups to the river-bank in the gray of the morning; possibly diverging for a day or two from the trail to climb some towering peak — Lincoln, perhaps — and to look down from its summit, two or three miles above the sea, upon a marvellous panorama of park, peak, canyon and plain. Glorious outings indeed were these, and a half-score of similar ones were possible, in as many various directions — none requiring more than a stout wagon and team, with one or two saddle horses and a few simple accessories, and any or all of them possible to the poorest colonist, and indeed very generally availed of, summer after summer.

—— At the other end of the year, that precious climate of ours, whose kindly qualities we vaunt so persistently in the skeptical ears of the outside world, is, to confess the truth, guilty of ingratitude at times by exhibiting vagaries as rudely eccentric as those of ordinary localities; yet, accustomed as we have been taught by, our peculiar environment, to turn everything to use or make it contribute to our diversion, we hasten to profit by the great snow-fall which, in more than one season that you and I remember, visits our hills early in the autumn and settles itself down for a comfortable stay, being joined at short intervals by others of its kind, and escorted and assisted by the cold north wind, until in a week or two they have together covered the brown hills with a thick and lasting blanket of dazzling white, and converted the roadway that winds around their base into a compact, well-ballasted track, as clearly defined as a railway, and with a surface so invitingly smooth that no one at least who has ever coasted the winter hills of New England — and there are many of these among us — can withstand its seductiveness.

But, unused as we are to such visitations, we are caught in a state of ludicrous unreadiness; for there is not, in fact, a single sleigh within the colony's borders. This is a condition, however, that is not allowed to continue for many hours after the weather at last clears for the time, and the new road-bed exhibits its unusual promise of reasonable permanency. There is plenty of lumber in town, and an abundance of iron hoops and similar material that it needs no cunning artificer to fashion into runners, and the small boy of the colony is quick to develop his ingenuity under the spur of such a supreme occasion — although indeed the village blacksmith also does a brisk business for a time. A sleighing fete is soon inaugurated which is to continue night after night for many weeks with scarce an interval, and which is as notably comprehensive in its *ensemble* as it is crudely fantastic in its equipment because of the many unique constructions that are forced into service — scores and scores of them, indeed, from the single-seat carved out of a dry-goods box, that serves the youth and his girl, to the twenty-foot coaster, a combination of two rough woodsleds, that carries a dozen men down the steep grade with the velocity of a railway train, and requires as much muscular skill at its bows as a ship's helm in a rough sea-way. The course measures a fair two miles in its extreme length from its crown in Nevada to its foot in Black Hawk, and descends more than half a thousand feet before the grade eases sufficiently to allow of the riders voluntarily disembarking *en route*; for many are the sharp curves and the pitfalls that call for all the skill of the helmsman, and many the luckless ones nightly who are deposited with small ceremony in the middle of the bordering gulch — shot out as from a catapult, and fortunate indeed if they find their temporary rest in a friendly and all-embracing snow-bank rather than among the many jagged rocks that mark the way.

On moonlit nights especially is the occasion one of high festival, and the scene one of hilarious excitement. The highway is free — "open to all comers" — and at times a fair half of the colony are either rushing down the crowded course as *voyageurs*, or looking on and cheering those who are. And not by any means are these latter confined to the giddy youth or the reckless spirits of the community. The merchant, the banker, and the staid professional man are there, jostling elbows with the toiler who has spent his day a thousand feet underground, and is now keen for a bit of relaxation in the crisp outer air. The parish priest, robust, rosy and bubbling over with high spirits, waves a cheery salute *en passant* to the clerical brother of another sect, who has shed his dignity for the time, and is acting the *preux chevalier* to some of the sisters of his flock, as he gallantly toils back up the long hill with the empty sled for a fresh start. The schoolmaster also is there, glad enough to accept the dauntless pilotage of the boy who but this morning cowered at his frown; and the young schoolma'ams make up more than one sled-load of laughing, shrinking, breathless figures as they speed down the slippery way. It is exhilarating, thrilling, and often dangerous sport, for at times the roadway is badly jammed, and a fine mix-up ensues when rounding a curve — and then it is *sauve qui peut*, and the d——l take the foremost. Many are the lesser casualties of one kind and another, while one well-known citizen indeed undergoes a three-months' term of meditation over a broken leg as his share of the season's mishaps; but the sport is too good to be checked by such trifles as these, and the opportunity too rare in our Italian climate to be allowed to pass unimproved.

It chances that about this time there is a temporary sojourner among us, taking notes of the country in general; and he finds this continuous moonlight coasting carnival so full of exciting interest that he is tempted to turn the occasion to profit, by furnishing his distant journal with an exceptional bit of sensation. It is a rare chance for the display of his imaginative powers, which are by no means meagre; the scene is thousands of miles distant from his chief circle of readers, who have about as clear an idea of the country as they have of Timbuctoo; and thus it happens that within a month the Atlantic mails bring in a goodly batch of copies of *The New York Sunday Flash* to the colony, with a tragic and heart-moving story of one night's reckless work among the rough spirits of the hills:—a story full of elaborate detail, garishly illustrated, which pictures among other things the course of one heavy coaster down the long reach of Nevada gulch and through the main street of Central—at the foot of which, instead of keeping decently to the road in making the eastward turn for Black Hawk, it takes a flying leap and a short cut through the open doorway and closed windows of the corner shop without accident, but in the next few hundred yards distributes fifteen or twenty dead at intervals along Gregory gulch before it can be stopped in its inhuman progress. The colonists read the harrowing tale with some measure of cynical interest; but, with never a tear for the unknown dead, they heartlessly continue their ruthless sport until warm winds blow from the south and gradually dissolve the roadbed, after an existence covering the longest period in the memory of the oldest colonist.

—— One recalls also * * * I was about to say, but I am persuaded I have written enough. It is time to stop; not that memory can be no further depended upon for "old colony" pictures, nor that they are difficult to reproduce, for indeed when invited they crowd in upon the brain, these representative scenes, and follow the pen readily enough. I have found the work a fascinating diversion thus far rather than a task, and if I have awakened welcome memories in you, my reader — for I presume you are one of the clan — let us congratulate one another; but let us agree to keep the memories pleasing, and close the book with the life and the brightness of the last grouping fresh before our eyes, and while the shouts of the merry-makers still linger in our ears. I have tried to fill this picture with bright and cheery colors; but, while it is a representative, it is but an abstract and impersonal one, this last on the canvas, and the impulse is strong — irresistible almost — to supply the actual detail to the *ensemble* — to introduce the real figures that furnish its life and action. This would doubtless also enhance its interest; but in attempting too faithful a detail, should we not inevitably be led into retrospect more or less mournful: should we not begin to realize how many of the once prominent figures of these scenes have already passed into the land of shadows? And why thus needlessly remind ourselves, also, of the lapse of time between the action and its record here? Do you notice any especial reference to chronology in these last few pages? I think not. So I say, therefore, let us stop, and agree between ourselves that this last grouping is a picture but of yesterday — why not? can we not juggle with time, and challenge any one to assert the contrary? to say that we are not still in the heyday and flush of youth, you and I of the clan — still coasting under the winter moonlight down the long hills — still camping along the summer streams? And if any dare demur, why not crush them into silence by the ocular demonstration of a club party—and in its old accustomed place, too? The Teller House may be had, I'm sure, for the asking, and I will agree to pass the word along for a gathering of the clan, if you will secure Patz and his fiddlers. And what a glorious reunion that would be also for its own sake!

Still—what if Patz—— Now I'm surely courting trouble again, and I'll write no more. Fare-you-well.